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**MY SCHOOLBOY FRIENDS.**





# MY SCHOOLBOY FRIENDS:

A Story of

WHITMINSTER GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

BY

ASCOTT R. HOPE,

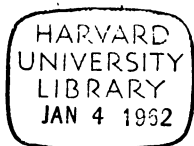
AUTHOR OF "STORIES OF SCHOOL LIFE," "A BOOK ABOUT BOYS,"  
ETC. ETC.

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TO  
THE BOYS OF — SCHOOL,  
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED,  
IN  
REMEMBRANCE OF THEIR KINDNESS  
TO  
THE AUTHOR.





## PREFACE.

---

IN this book I am sorry that I have not been able to follow the instructions of some critics of my "Stories of School Life" who objected to one of these stories as containing nothing but petty and commonplace incidents. This story, I happen to know, is the one that has been best liked by boys, for whom I wrote. In purveying literature for this class of the community, we are too much in the habit of considering what is interesting to us, and the boys are thus deprived of a kind of reading which is very interesting to them. We may see nothing at all amusing in a narrative of how two silly little urchins quarrelled and fought, and made friends, and had black eyes, and were summoned before the Rev. Mr Draco, and were punished or let off, as the case may be; but there was a period in our existence, before we acquired a relish for politics and scandal, when such events were of the utmost importance to us. The thickness of the Draconian

cane is a matter of profound indifference to you, but to your son it is a subject of more concern than the size of all the armies and navies of Europe. If a tea-cup full of water be shaken, it does not cost me a thought ; but some thousands of animalculæ are aware of a convulsion of nature.

Now, I believe that boys like to read about nothing better than the incidents of their everyday life, if properly treated, and I have kept this in view in writing the following pages, without caring how petty and commonplace my story may seem to older readers, who have supped full of the horrors of three volumed novels. I believe so firmly in this principle, that, in carrying it out, I have not thought necessary to draw upon the circumstances that form the chief capital of most tales of this kind. I have made no use of the customs and character of a large public school, nor of the advanced views and habits of "young gentlemen," nor of the striking lights and shades which may be brought out by the contrast between very good and very bad boys. I have simply tried to represent the ordinary life of ordinary boys at a very ordinary sort of school, and if grown-up critics condemn my representation as uninteresting, I appeal to my juvenile reader, who, for this once only, is requested to perform the part of Cæsar. I hope for his

favourable judgment, seeing that to gain it I have laboured at least twice as hard and as long as it would have taken me to dash off several bundles of incredible adventures by flood and field.

If my story be considered to have attained its aim in faithfully representing school life, I am bound to express my indebtedness to several friends whose suggestions have in no small degree helped me to make it so. As to any other aim which I may have had before me, I shall say nothing here; but there are two things which the observant reader will be kind enough to bear in mind :

First, that from a literary point of view this story is to be judged as being only half-a-story; and that, if it finishes on a different note from that on which it began it is because the part to come will be in another key.

Second, that the existence of Whitminster Grammar School, and the masters thereof, is as fictitious as the autobiographical form which the story takes.

A. R. H.

28 ST JAMES' SQUARE,  
EDINBURGH.







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# MY SCHOOLBOY FRIENDS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### MY "PRIMARY" EDUCATION.

**I** CAN very distinctly remember a certain wet April afternoon, when I, a boy in my thirteenth year, was sitting alone in a second class railway carriage, which was whirling me along to Whitminster.

My father lived at a poky little town, which my readers probably never heard of, and there I had passed my life till this time. I had four sisters of different ages, but only one brother, not yet out of petticoats, and my mother had never been able to make up her mind to send me from home. So I had received the rudiments of my education in my native town.

At the age of five I was sent to a school for little boys and girls, kept by two sisters. I have forgotten their surname, but we called them Miss Mary and Miss Kitty, and they had another sister, married to a farmer

in the neighbourhood, to whose house we used to be taken every summer to eat strawberries and cream. Miss Mary, I remember, was very strict and dignified, sometimes a little cross; Miss Kitty was good-natured and plump, but not so wise as her sister. Miss Mary used to hear most of our lessons; Miss Kitty set copies for us and played with us in the garden. I have an affectionate remembrance of Miss Kitty, and of a wonderful pocket of hers, containing all sorts of useful articles, from a spelling book to a bag of sweets, which she dealt out to us when we had coughs. I remember how she pulled her handkerchief out of it, and kindly tried to dry my tears when I gave way to an outburst of grief and despair on finding myself for the first time in their schoolroom. But I howled on, demanding to be taken back to my mamma, and was only quieted by Miss Mary's stern voice, ordering me not to make a baby of myself.

Miss Mary, as the exactor of tasks and the more frequent dispenser of punishments, we looked up to with greater awe. She dealt out justice with iron hand. For slight offences we were put on a high stool in the corner—a punishment by which we were supposed to be overwhelmed in disgrace, though, as being placed in this position generally gave us an opportunity of looking out of the window, it was found, after a time, to have very little effect on us. If a severer punishment was required, we got a bad mark. The threat of this generally impressed us with dread, chiefly, I believe,

because there was something mysterious about it. We never knew that any evil results came upon us from these bad marks, still an ill-doer's heart used to sink within him when Miss Mary solemnly unclasped that brass-bound volume and set a cross opposite his name in it. There were only one or two hardened offenders who were not troubled by having three bad marks in the week, and openly professed that they "didn't care." But when high crimes and misdemeanours had been perpetrated, Miss Mary brought out the rod, the administration of which on the hands of a schoolfellow we always beheld with great interest, not to say excitement. We seldom got the rod except for great crimes, such as telling lies, or throwing stones, or biting our nails. This instrument was a short stick about a foot long. There was a tradition among us that it had been soaked in salt and water to make it sting more; but I am unable to say that this rested on any scientific or other authority. For the first year or two of our career we regarded it with great awe, though there were veterans who came in time to sneer at it. My cousin Tom once put a hair in his hand when he was going to be "pandied," having heard that this would make it split; but it didn't; and the daring attempt to diminish our respect for it came to naught.

Miss Mary made me learn my lessons well. When I first went to her school I could read a little, and I was put into the lowest class but one. For some months there was only one girl in this class with me. She

wasn't a bad sort of girl, but there was a good deal of jealousy and rivalry between us. When she got above me I pinched her, and when I got up she cried. Whichever of us was top at the end of the morning got a little tin medal to wear till next day. I generally had this medal, and I used to be so angry if she had it. One day when she had been successful, she was triumphing over me, and teasing me all the way home, till my wrath boiled over, and I struck her. Just then her brother came up, and gave me the first good thrashing I ever had. I ran home in great indignation and complained to my father, but he said it served me right for striking a girl. There was a coolness between my class-fellow and me for some days afterwards, though in due time a reconciliation was brought about by her offering me a piece of barley sugar while Miss Mary's back was turned.

Soon after this I took the measles, and my rival had it all her own way. Miss Kitty came to the house to fetch the medal for her, and, of course, she wore it every day while I was absent. When I came back to school I found her dressed in a black frock, and when I asked her why, she cried, and Miss Kitty told me that her papa was dead. I think I was kind to her after that. I remember telling her that she might have the medal every day if she liked, but after a day or two she did not come back to school, and I never saw her again. Then I was put up into the third class, where there were about six boys and girls, and here I got bad marks oftener than the medal.

Though Miss Mary was strict about our lessons, she was not unmindful of the proverb that all work and no play makes dull boys and girls. Every hour we were sent out into the garden, or in bad weather, into a large room which had been the kitchen, and there we disported ourselves to our heart's content. Oh, these golden hours in that little strip of garden! I dare say many of them were clouded by tears and ill temper, but I have forgotten that part, and only remember the happiness. Never since have I seen greener grass or brighter daisies. Never since have I heard such hearty shouts and such careless laughter. Never since have I known the pleasure with which, on a hot day, we sat in the little arbour at the end of the garden and made chains of dandelions, while Miss Kitty told us the story of Cinderella or Jack and the Bean Stalk.

In winter it was not so pleasant. Both our instructresses had a great horror of our catching cold, which Miss Kitty showed by giving us sweets, and Miss Mary by stifling us in comforters. This—not the sweets, but the comforter—I always looked upon, from the very dawn of boyish intelligence, as a great nuisance, and an insult to my dignity, whence arose many disputes between me and Miss Mary. It will be seen that I was not what that lady called “a good boy,” and the rod and the mark book had often to be used to overawe me. At the age of seven I was put into trousers, and became so rebellious that I was soon afterwards taken away from the ladies' school and sent to “the Swansea Street Private



Academy for Young Gentlemen," which had the name of being the best boys' school in our town.

There was a period in my existence when I looked up to Mr Brown, the master of this educational institution, as a being of enormous learning and astounding wisdom, and I can well recall the look of horror and disgust with which he would hear me spell dumb without a *b*; but on thinking over the matter, I have since come to the conclusion that some of his pupils knew almost as much as their master. A dim suspicion of this crossed the minds of myself and my schoolfellows when, by desire of our parents, we bid adieu to spelling and entered upon Latin Grammar. It soon struck us that Mr Brown was not quite at home in this branch of knowledge. We made nothing, indeed, of the fact that he always had a key before him when he corrected our Latin exercises, for we were as yet unaware that mortal man could be expected to know when to put these troublesome ablatives and genitives without some such assistance, and we only thought it hard that we should not be allowed to see which substantive an adjective was expected to agree with. But we did think that our preceptor should have known how to decline nouns and verbs off by heart, and it seemed unfair that we should be thrashed for not remembering the genitive plural of *animal*, when Mr Brown himself had to look in the book before he could find out what it was. When we had got the length of the verbs a new boy came among us, who did a great deal to shake our wavering faith in our

master. He had been at a regular large school and brought this report, that there the masters didn't need to look at the book at all, and yet found you out if you made ever so small a blunder in going over *amo*. As for the idea of a key to Henry's Latin Exercises, he laughed it to scorn. One day Mr Brown left this useful work lying about, and our new schoolfellow had the cunning and audacity to put it in the fire, prophesying that we should have no more Latin exercises to do for some time. He turned out to be right, and we respected him accordingly; though, as Mr Brown gave us a long imposition to learn off by heart when he found that his key had unaccountably disappeared, we were not quite sure that we had done a wise thing on the whole.

Soon after this, Mr Brown got an assistant, a young man who could translate Virgil and knew Greek. He took a great deal of pains with us, for which I am afraid we were not very grateful, and with him we really made some progress. But he soon went away, and we were once more abandoned to the sole charge of the headmaster, as he called himself, of Swansea Street Private Academy.

The big boys, as we called ourselves, now began to have an easy time of it. Mr Brown did not attempt to lead us into any new paths of knowledge, possibly because he knew no more himself; and, thanks to the other master, most of us had acquired a familiarity with the Latin nouns and verbs that enabled us to set him at defiance. The only things that bothered us were geo-

graphy lessons and learning poetry by heart, which we had to do every second day. About half our school time we spent in trifling and playing tricks, and for part of the other half Mr Brown employed us in looking after the little boys, an amusement which we entered into with great zest. I remember what delight some of us took in boxing their ears and scolding them, just as he used to do to us. The rest of the time we spent in reading and saying repetitions, and occasionally making a great show of writing in copy books. Mr Brown's ideas about the teaching of writing were simple. Any boy who made a blot was caned ; if we only took care not to do this we might be as idle as we pleased, and if he caught us at it there was always the excuse ready that we were waiting for a page to dry. The time that our copies took to dry in Mr Brown's academy was something wonderful.

Sometimes Mr Brown would go out of school for half-an-hour at a time, ordering the biggest boy to write down the name of any one who misbehaved himself. But the only steps this substitute felt compelled to take for the preservation of order was to put a small boy as a spy for the return of the master, and then we delivered ourselves up to all sorts of antics, upsetting the forms, filling the room with dust, scribbling on the black board, and pelting each other with books. Sometimes we were caught at these amusements, sometimes we managed to get back to our places and look intent on our copies before the master re-entered ; but in any case we were

prepared to take a caning with a certain amount of philosophic resignation. We were just as often punished when we did not deserve it as when we did, and we had come to look upon the cane as a necessary and unavoidable evil. When it was locked up in the desk we rejoiced ; when it came out we rubbed our hands on our trousers, and prepared to meet our fate as cheerfully as might be. To do Mr Brown justice, his cane was not very thick, and he did not use it very severely. At times he threatened us with a worse evil—to keep us in after school hours ; but he generally forgot all about it, or, if he did remember, the boy was reckoned a very contemptible and worthless character who couldn't get out at the window and run home.

We did not like Mr Brown, and we did not dislike him. He and his school seemed to us to be quite as much among the accidents of life as chilblains and rainy days. It was not a pleasant, but it was a natural thing, that we should for some unknown reason be confined in a dusty room for three hours at a time, and be made to say poetry off by heart. If we could lighten the tedium of these weary hours by playing tricks or doing mischief, so much the better. If we were caught, it was clearly Mr Brown's business to thrash us. An occasional lie was allowable to get out of a scrape, but not to get a schoolfellow into one. To cheat one another was the height of baseness, but to succeed in cheating our master was the best of jokes. We were not careful to be righteous overmuch or to grumble at our fate. Life

was a riddle which we did not attempt to understand, but almost everything in it was done for the best, especially holidays. Such was our theory of existence and standard of morals.

My father had more extended ideas on the subject of education, and when my twelfth birthday came, he began to think of sending me to another school. He would have done this sooner if he had known more about Mr Brown's establishment. Of course, we never told tales at home, but his eyes were rather opened by an event which created some little sensation in our small town.

One day, Mr Brown announced that he was going out for half-an-hour, and bade us sit very quiet till he returned. As soon as he was gone we obeyed him by beginning to romp as usual. But my cousin Tom giving me to understand that he had a dark and deep design to impart to me in private, we two slipped out of the schoolroom and repaired to a disused stable which appertained to the back premises of the Swansea Street Private Academy. Here Tom produced a bottle of phosphorus, and we proceeded to experiment with it. His idea was to draw a ghost on the wall, and then enticing a small boy into the stable, suddenly to shut the door, and enjoy his alarm at the apparition which would become visible in the darkness. I thought this a great joke, and between us we succeeded in drawing a skeleton, and writing below in letters of blue fire "The *ghost* of old Brown."

This work of art might have had the effect of terrifying some nervous boy out of his wits, but we didn't think of that. Our plan was interfered with, though; for just as we had finished, and were regarding our handiwork in great glee, we heard one of the boys calling to us from a window that Mr Brown was in sight. So Tom put the phosphorus in his pocket, and we hurried back to the schoolroom, arriving just in time to be found sitting innocently at our desks when the master entered.

Mr Brown glanced round the room suspiciously, but seeing every boy in his place, he ascended his desk and proceeded to hear one-half of the school do sums from the black board, while the others wrote or pretended to write in their copybooks. For myself, sitting in the furthest corner of the room, I was peacefully engaged in stealthy comparison of marbles with my neighbour, which was a doubly pleasing occupation from our knowledge that we should both have to shake hands with the cane if we were found out.

But before we had finished our game, a peculiar smell began to be felt in the room; and Mr Brown remarked, "I can't think where all this smoke is coming from."

Tom and I looked at each other, and our hearts sunk within us. And another boy who sat near the window, jumped up, crying—"Oh, sir! the stable's on fire."

We all rushed to the window, and sure enough there was a thick wreath of smoke pouring out from the half-

opened door of the stable. This was the phosphorus, of course.

Then ensued a scene of hurry and confusion. Off went Mr Brown and the most sensible of the boys to try and extinguish the flames ; some ran for the fire engines, while others did their best to throw the whole town into as great alarm as themselves, by rushing out into the street and bellowing " fire ! " at the pitch of their voices.

As for Tom and me, we decided on flight, and made our way as fast as we could to an old quarry just outside of the town, where we remained for two or three hours, expecting every moment to see a policeman coming in search of us. We had got into a nice scrape ! Mr Brown's house would be burned, perhaps the whole town, and what would happen to us when it was known that we had caused the fire. Tom darkly hinted at running away to America, but I didn't seem to feel equal to that, and neither of us knew how to set about it. He was very penitent, and by way of proving it, threw all the phosphorus into a pool of water ; which act appeared to afford him great relief.

At length we took courage and ventured to return to the town, where we found that the fire had been extinguished in a very short time, before it had spread beyond the stable. This took a great weight off our minds, but we were plunged into despair again by hearing everybody asking " who did it ? " And taking counsel together, we agreed that the best thing to do was to confess to our respective mammas.

Then there was a great row. We were well scolded at home, and solemnly caned by Mr Brown in school. My father and Tom's had to pay several pounds for the damage done. We were talked about and lectured at all over the town as a pair of hardened young ruffians. And there was this further result, that when my father heard how Mr Brown was in the habit of going away in school hours, and leaving us to our own sweet will, he took an early opportunity of removing me from the Swansea Street Private Academy, and looking out for some other school to which I might be sent.

In the meanwhile I was not idle. A cousin of mine had come to be curate in a neighbouring parish, and my father got him to go on with my Latin. My cousin was a jolly fellow, and I rather chuckled at the idea of doing lessons with him ; but I soon found out that though he was fond of fun, he had a pretty good idea of work too. He did not allow me to be idle. He made me begin Greek grammar and Latin delectus, and after a few disputes as to whether or not I should look up the words in the vocabulary, I gave in, and learned more with him in three months than I had done with Mr Brown for a year. This went on till Easter, and then my father made up his mind to send me to the grammar school at Whitminster, which was about fifty miles from us.

Arrangements were soon made. I was to board in the headmaster's house, and have sixpence a week pocket-money. Two new suits of clothes and a cricket-



bat were provided to furnish me forth for my new career. A cake was baked, and Smiles the carpenter made a box to hold it and my other treasures. My sisters all gave me some present or other. Polly, our cook, allowed me, without rebuke, to enter the kitchen and taste her jam tarts. The rector stopped me in the street, and said he hoped I would be a good boy. I felt myself a person of importance, and this sustained me against the idea of leaving home, though, as the day drew near, I was sometimes not sure whether I should not have a quiet cry over the matter. There was a certain amount of excitement, and also a certain amount of dread, in the idea of leaving the scenes and the friends among whom I had hitherto spent my life.

My father was to have gone with me to Whitminster, but was prevented by an accident. The night before my departure there was a sharp frost, and in crossing the yard to our stables to see a horse which was ill, he slipped and slightly sprained his ankle. This is why I was sitting alone in the railway carriage; and, after having dried a few tears which would come as I said good-bye to them all at the station, was looking out into the wet fields and hedgerows, and pondering over many things.

My feelings, as I have said, were of two kinds. On the one hand, there was the love of change and novelty, so natural to boys; on the other, the sensation of helplessness which one feels on going among strangers. For the last year or two I had been somebody at Mr Brown's

school, but now, I more than suspected that I should be a nobody at this great school ; for a great school it was in my eyes—a very Eton. Still, I had some talents, which might secure for me a favourable reception in this new sphere of society. I had been one of the best high-jumpers among my schoolfellows, and had a knack of being able to put my thumb out of joint, which had never failed to rouse the admiration of any boys I had met with. Besides, in my box there was a stock of splendid marbles, which could not but make an impression on my new companions—not to speak of the cricket-bat. But there might be some big bullies who would make my life miserable. I had read of such things in books, and the masters—they would, doubtless, be more awful beings to deal with than Mr Brown, who was a most despicable object whenever he forgot to bring his spectacles into school, as he often did. Flogging, and fagging, and other unutterable terrors, I had heard of. On the whole, I was inclined to wish myself at home again ; and the wet, miserable look of the day did not tend to make me more cheerful. But there was no use in fretting ; what must be, must be ; and I tried to look on the bright side of things, and to persuade myself of the reality of the pleasures of school life.

My cogitations were brought to an end by the train arriving at Whitminster. After getting into a great fright at not being able to find my ticket till I had turned out all my pockets, I was safely deposited on

the platform, and the guard, who had been charged to look after me, got my box from the van, and saw me into a fly. I dare say some boys will think I was a great baby, and a very helpless fellow. But I had never travelled by myself before, and had scarcely ever been away from home.





## CHAPTER II.

DR PEARSON'S.

**I**T was still light as I drove through the streets, and it seemed to me that Whitminster was an enormous town. What should I have thought if I had been told that it was not one-fortieth part the size of London. Whenever I passed a large building, I wondered if it was the grammar school, and I stared at every boy in the street with great interest, supposing that he might be one of my future schoolfellows.

After about ten minutes driving, we stopped at a large brick house in the suburbs, and the driver lifted down my trunk and rang the bell.

"This is Dr Pearson's, sir," he said, opening the door of the fly for me with great deference.

And now I was grateful to that driver, for as I stood with my purse in my hand, hesitating how to enter upon the subject of payment, he perceived my embarrassment, and made haste to assist me.

"The fare is three shillings, sir, but gentlemen gene-

rally give four. You see, sir, that 'ill's a nasty pull for an 'oss ; and then there's that 'eavy box of yours, sir."

With great dignity I paid him four shillings, and felt relieved when I had done so, though I had a vague suspicion, which has since increased to a certainty, that I was giving him about double his due.

By this time a maid-servant had made her appearance, who, without saying a word, carried in my trunk and play-box, and then showed me across the passage into a parlour, announcing me as "The new boy."

I was received by a prim but kindly-looking old lady, with a row of white curls round her head, who was sitting in state at the head of a table, on which stood a tea-pot, a ham, toast, and other materials for a meal, which I, for a wonder, regarded with profound indifference. I had been comforting myself by eating gingerbread nuts on the journey, and this may explain my want of appetite. But I was not sorry to see a cosy-looking fire, for though it was April, the weather was bitterly cold, and Whitminster, as I afterwards heard, has the reputation of being the coldest town in England.

Mrs Pearson—for I at once guessed her to be my master's wife—shook hands with me, invited me to take off my coat and sit near the fire, and then began to pour out tea. I was not inclined to be talkative, and she had hard work to keep up a conversation. She asked me about my journey, how I had left my family, how I thought I should like school, and so forth ; but she could get nothing out of me but "Yes, ma'am," and

"Pretty well, thank you, ma'am," and all the while I was timidly glancing round the room, and wondering where the boys were, and when I should see the awful Dr Pearson himself. Then she examined me about my clothes; and when I had given satisfactory answers as to the number of my stockings, and the condition of my boots, and had been cautioned to take care of tearing my trousers and getting my feet wet, we were again at a loss for conversation. It was in vain that she pressed me to partake of ham and toast and muffins. I sat with my tea untasted before me, twiddling my thumbs, and peeping at her curls and her cap, which was of wondrous and imposing structure. I never had known a grandmother or aged aunt, and had been accustomed to look upon old ladies with great awe.

I dare say Mrs Pearson was growing just as tired of this *tête-à-tête* as I was, when it was put an end to by a low knock at the door, followed by the entrance of a pleasant, neat-looking boy, who seemed rather older than myself.

"Ah, Phillips! good evening."

"Good evening, ma'am," said the boy, coming forward with a polite and self-confident air, which made me open the eyes of astonishment. "I hope you don't find this cold weather disagreeable, Mrs Pearson."

"Don't talk of it," said Mrs Pearson, shuddering. "Now, what do you want, Phillips?"

"Might I have an order for a necktie?" said Master Phillips, with an insinuating smile.

"Why, I believe you have had three neckties since Christmas. You are always wanting something new, Phillips."

"Well, ma'am, one's clothes get so destroyed at school. See how shabby my necktie is, and my Sunday one is not much better."

"I suppose I must give you an order ; but I do not know what your father will say when he sees your bills," said she, going across the room to a writing desk.

In the meantime, Phillips and I looked sideways at each other. I was wondering if he was a nice fellow, and I suppose he was inwardly criticising me. But neither of us spoke till Mrs Pearson had finished writing the order, and then she turned round and said :

"This is the new boy, Phillips. Will you take him into the boys' room, and look after him for a little ?"

"I shall be very glad," said Phillips, smiling. "Good evening, Mrs Pearson."

"Good evening. Now, you must not come to me for another necktie till midsummer. Good evening, Smith. I hope you have not caught cold on your journey."

I backed out of the room without taking such a polite leave as my companion, and followed him through several passages to a door, behind which I could hear sundry sounds indicative of the presence of boys.

"Have you been to school before?" was the only thing Phillips said to me.

"Yes," I replied, with proper pride, and as he opened

the door I drew myself up and tried to look as cool and confident as possible.

We entered a large room with no furniture but plain wooden tables, forms, and book-shelves, and found twenty or thirty boys engaged in different ways. A few were sitting at the tables reading or drawing. One or two were making nets, and a friend of theirs was occupying himself in alternately watching them and trying to stand on his head. Some half-dozen were having a steeple-chase over the forms. One fat youth was sitting solitary in a corner eating a tart. Another, elevated on a book shelf, was making a horrible noise through an enormous paper trumpet, while a couple of small boys had hold of each of his legs, and were trying to pull him down. The rest were standing round the fireplace doing nothing in particular.

Of course, as soon as I came in, every eye was turned upon me, and my small stock of confidence vanished at once. I stuck close to Phillips, and, with my eyes fixed on the ground, followed him up to the fireplace.

"This is the new boy," he said, by way of introduction.

The group stared at me for a minute in silence, and then one of them put the time-honoured question, "What's your name?"

"Smith," I replied, priding myself on my knowingness in not falling into the mistake made by a cousin of mine, who, being sent to school for the first time, had informed the boys that his name was "Tommy."



"What? no! it cannot be!" cried another boy, starting from his seat, and throwing up his arms in mock amazement. "Smith! You don't mean to say so! Stop! Surely I've heard that name before! Haven't you, Kennedy?"

"Surely I've heard that joke before?" said Kennedy. "If you pinch me again, Abbing, I'll squash you."

"Please don't," said Abbing, cutting a caper. He seemed unable to stand still or hold his tongue for a moment, and presently he went on: "I say, you new fellow, I'd advise you to look out. There's a big fellow here who hates boys called Smith, and he always licks them whenever he gets a chance. My eye, I shouldn't like to be you."

"Shut up," said Phillips. "Never you mind, Smith; it's only Abbing's nonsense. He's always talking bosh."

"Boo! hoo! Ha! Jemima!" exclaimed Abbing, uttering a howl of derision, and diving under the table to escape the cuff which Phillips aimed at him.

"Won't you come nearer the fire?" said the boy called Kennedy, drawing back to make room for me.

"Cock-a-doodle doo! Pretty Jemima! Pretty Jemima Ann!" screamed Abbing, popping up his head from beneath the other end of the table.

"I'll lick you, Abbing," cried Phillips, rushing off in pursuit, and a lively chase took place for two or three minutes, which ended in Abbing being hauled out by the leg from beneath the table, and having his ears

pulled by Phillips, as it seemed to me, half in fun and half in earnest.

"Boo, hoo!" he cried, pretending to be very penitent. "I won't call you *Jemima* again. Please let me off this time, and I never will. Oh, no! I'm so sorry. Lend me a pocket-handkerchief, and I'll show you how sorry I am."

"Well, shut up, and don't be cheeky," said Phillips, releasing him, and coming back to the fireplace.

The conversation now became general, as the newspapers say, and, thanks to Phillips and Kennedy, I began to feel quite at home. There were none of the big bullies whom I had dreaded; indeed most of the boys in the room were no bigger than myself. Nobody had tried to tease me except Abbing; and as for him, I had an idea I could lick him without much difficulty. So I joined in the talk of the rest about the coming cricket season, and, waxing confidential, treated them to a glowing description of the splendid swipes which my friend Bill Barlett used to take. From this I passed to an account of the celebrated fight between Maddison, the cock of our school, and a misguided baker's boy who had ventured to call him "*Bellows*" in public, and had been made sorely to rue his boldness. I am afraid I rather made out Mr Brown's to be a much more pretentious institution than it really was, with the idea of impressing on my hearers that I had been accustomed to associate with boys of the most respectable character, and therefore was a personage by no means to be thought lightly of.

"Are there no big boys at this school?" I asked, glancing round the room.

"Oh yes, loads. But most of them are town boys, and all the big fellows among the boarders have studies for themselves."

"What do you call this animal?" said Abbing, pointing to a boy of fourteen or fifteen who was writing at one of the tables. "Hallo, Kennedy Primus! Kangaroo! Come here, and be exhibited. He won't listen. Vialls has given him an imposition, and that has made him savage."

"He's my big brother," said Kennedy. "Isn't he a great fat lubber?"

"Has he not got a study, too?" asked I.

"No. He mayn't have one because he can't get up into the fourth form."

"He's a stupid fellow, and an awful muff," Abbing whispered to me. "Look here, Smith. Just you go and pull his hair. He won't say a word."

I was fool enough to believe him, and to think that this would be a very good opportunity of displaying my valour. So I crept up behind big Kennedy, and gave his hair a sharp tug. The result was one which I had not expected. He jumped up with an exclamation of wrath and gave me a swinging box on the ear.

"What did you do that for, you little donkey! I'll teach you to meddle with me."

"It was Abbing told me to do it," stammered I, in great confusion.

"Abbing, I'll give you such a licking when I've finished this."

"Oh, ho!" shouted Abbing; "Kangaroo Primus is in a wax. Look at him!"

"I'll wax you presently if you don't hold your tongue. Can't you leave a fellow alone when you see he has got an imposition to do."

At that moment there was a sudden hush through the room as a young clergyman appeared at the door, at whose entrance the boys scuttled off right and left to the book-shelves.

"Get your books. It's time for preparation," he cried, marching down the room.

As I was conscious of looking very red and foolish, I made haste to get out of his way and to hide myself in a group of boys that were pressing past the fireplace. But before long I heard the master's voice asking for me, and was obliged to come forward and be presented to him.

I regarded him with great awe, forming at once an instinctive idea that he was a person by no means to be trifled with. He did not seem to notice that anything was the matter with me, but began to ask me some questions as to what work I had done, and to examine me in Latin and Greek Grammar. Then he showed me a seat at one of the tables, and giving me a book to read, left me to my own devices.

The boys were now supposed to be employed in learning their lessons for next day, while the master

walked up and down the room and read the newspaper. Not feeling very much interested in the book which he had given me—it was a volume of Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire"—I amused myself by looking about and noticing some things which seemed to escape his observation. He did not allow us to utter a whisper, and once or twice threatened to punish boys for making a noise with their feet; but if they only sat still, they might do pretty much as they pleased, at my end of the room at least; and some of them, I can answer for it, did not do much of what they were supposed to be doing. One boy who sat next me had no dictionary, and being unable to get one by means of a course of telegraphic appeals to his friends round about him, opened his grammar upside down, and gave himself up to the task of drawing pictures of four-legged animals on its pages. I have since had reason to believe that these animals were meant to be horses. My neighbour on the other side occupied himself in another way. On the fly-leaf of each of his books he had a neatly written calendar of all the days that were left till the holidays, and I should think he spent at least a quarter of an hour in crossing out a day from every one of them, and counting the rest over and over, as if to be sure he had made no mistake. When the calculation was at length finished, he informed me of the result by a note written in his Ovid, from which I learned that there were still fifty-eight days of school to be undergone, and sixty-six including Sundays. Opposite me two boys were having a quiet game at

noughts and crosses. Abbing, visibly to everybody but the master, was eating toffee ; and as for Phillips, who was rapidly turning over the pages of a large book, I couldn't make out what he was doing, till I was informed by him afterwards that he and another boy had undertaken to count the number of words in their Latin Dictionaries, and that they were trying which of them could finish the task first in preparation time, and without being caught.

Some of the boys, however, did their best to learn their lessons, others were tremendously industrious by fits and starts, and the rest were not exactly idle with impunity. One or two were caught trifling and made to stand up on a form, and even the cunning Mr Abbing, having put a larger piece of toffee in his mouth than was judicious under the circumstances, was presently detected, and not only had the rest of his sweets taken away from him, but was told that he should have an hour's detention ; a piece of intelligence which did not seem to afford him so much amusement as most things did.

At the end of an hour, the master told us to shut our books, and walked out of the room. There was a rush to the book-shelves, and then most of the boys began to howl and jump and otherwise express their satisfaction that their work was over for the day. I had been rather afraid that big Kennedy would make another onslaught upon me, but I was agreeably relieved to find that he had become quite good-humoured. At least, he was

lying full length on a form and allowing some half-dozen small boys to climb all over him and thump him as hard as they could with their little fists, an amusement which seemed to be equally enjoyed by both parties.

But in two or three minutes a bell rang, and seeing the rest of the boys pouring towards the door, I followed them into another large room, with one long table running down the centre of it, which Phillips whispered to me was the dining-hall. We had no sooner taken our places on one side of the table, than there was a trampling of feet heard on the stairs, and some half-a-dozen older boys made their appearance from their studies. Then another door opened and the servants came in, followed by Mrs Pearson, who took up her position at one end of the table, while the same master whom I had seen before, stood at the other and read prayers.

After prayers we went back into the boys' room, and a servant brought in a pile of pieces of bread and butter, for which there was a great scramble. Mrs Pearson had called me back to tell me that I was to sleep in Kennedy Primus' dormitory, so I sought him out and communicated this piece of intelligence, which he received with the remark—

“Are you? Then I hope you don't snore.”

“Oh, that's jolly!” cried Phillips, “I'm so glad you are going to be one of us. We are the best dormitory in the house.”

“Oh, yes, Jemima!” protested another boy, flying at him with a shout of derision, and pulling him to the

ground. "Confess that ours is the best, or I'll choke you."

"Our dormitory to the rescue!" shouted Phillips, and a general *melée* took place, in which I joined, and managed to distinguish myself by tripping up one of the largest champions of the other dormitory. When we had struggled and howled and laughed to our heart's content, and had upset two forms and an ink bottle, we got up from the floor all covered with dust, and big Kennedy was pleased to notice me by playfully taking hold of my ears and saying:

"Look here, you new fellow! don't you try pulling my hair again, or you shall see what you shall see."

Just then my box was brought in, and I was able to increase my popularity among my new friends by inviting them to partake of the good things which it contained. It was astonishing what a good opinion they at once began to have of me. Of my own character they were already inclined to think not unfavourably, and as to the excellence of my mother's gooseberry jam there could be no manner of doubt.

When the two pots of jam which I produced were consumed, I joined myself to a group of boys that was discussing a certain "Vialls," whose proceedings seemed to be in their eyes extremely objectionable, and I soon gathered that this obnoxious individual was no other than the master whom I had been already introduced to.

"Then, that isn't Dr Pearson," I exclaimed.



"Of course not. Pearson is as old as Methuselah, and scarcely ever shows."

"Vialls is the master who lives in our house here, and looks after us. He's a great beast. Perhaps you'll be in his form. Have you done much Latin? Have you been in Cæsar?"

"No. I've only been in Delectus and Henry's Exercises."

"Ah! then you'll be—"

"I say," interrupted Abbing, giving me a friendly poke, "didn't you hate that fellow Balbus, who was always building a wall or making some sort of an ass of himself."

"You'll likely be in Paddy Williamson's form."

"What sort of a fellow is he?" I asked, with great interest.

"Oh, not half bad. He's waxy sometimes, but it's soon over. He's a queer fellow in some things."

"I like Paddy well enough, but he has been giving a great deal too much detention lately," remarked Phillips.

"Are there any other masters?"

"Yes, there's Dalton. He's called the second master, you know, but he is really the head master. Pearson doesn't come to school once a month. He's always having the gout, or something of that sort."

"I wish I had the gout, or something of that sort, on repetition days," said Abbing.

"Dalton's a jolly fellow," said Kennedy, emphatically; and this sentiment seemed to meet with general approval.

"Then there's Bentley," said young Kennedy. "He takes the small boys."

"He's a muff," remarked Abbing. "He can't teach a bit. Last year I didn't know a word of my construing for three days running, and he said he'd cane me if I didn't improve by the end of the week. It's easy enough to humbug him."

Abbing's account of Mr Bentley's amiable weakness was cut short by the bell, which was summoning us to bed. And now I was struck by a peculiarity, as I thought it, of my new schoolfellows. At Mr Brown's we had seldom thought of obeying any order unless the eye of our master was on us, but these boys filed off at once without being told as soon as the bell rang. In the dormitory, too, the boys all knelt down together and said their prayers, and then, after a little steeple-chasing about the room, undressed and went quietly to bed. One or two seemed inclined to lark a little longer, but Kennedy Primus threatened to box their ears, and soon brought them to order. We were all in bed in a quarter of an hour, and it was not till half of us were asleep that Mr Vialls came and peeped into the room to see that all was right.

Our dormitory was a large one at the top of the house. Its occupants were the two Kennedys, Phillips, Abbing, and about half-a-dozen other boys besides myself. They all seemed very nice fellows, and I thought I should get on capitally at my new school, and began to compose in my own mind a glowing letter to

my mother about the good qualities of Phillips and the Kennedys.

When we were all in bed, and the light was put out, we began to talk, and Harry Kennedy volunteered to tell us a tale, a proposal which was received with general acclamation. It was a very wonderful tale, so far as I remember, all about a robber and a knight and a ghost, and a singular sort of animal with two heads and seven tails, which I strongly suspect must have been an invention of Kennedy's own. The knight went through many and terrible adventures, was caught by the robber, confined in the cave, met a beautiful young princess there, escaped, saw the ghost, made it tell him a tremendous secret, and, finally, I have no doubt succeeded in discomfiting the robber, cutting off the strange animals' heads and tails, and marrying the princess; but before the end I had dropped off to sleep, with the rattling and jolting of the railway train in my head.





## CHAPTER III.

### THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

**N**EXT morning, at a quarter to seven o'clock, I started out of my sleep, and looked round in surprise, for a moment wondering where I was. Rubbing my eyes, I saw the other boys stretching themselves, yawning, slowly throwing off their bed-clothes, and otherwise preparing to obey the sound of the bell, which was still ringing to call us. Most of them looked as if they would have liked to disobey it ; but Kennedy soon made them jump up, and hastily huddling on our clothes we proceeded down stairs, and crowded round the newly-lighted fire, till Mr Vialls appeared and sent us to our seats.

For half an hour we were again obliged to sit silent and prepare, or pretend to prepare, our lessons. Then we played about the room, or in a field at the back of the house for another half hour or so, at the end of which we were summoned to breakfast.

Breakfast happened to be rather late that morning,

and, as soon as it was over, there was a rush for boots and books, and the boys began to set off for the school, which, they told me, was some distance off. Now, it was a very cold morning, and, as my fingers were numbed, and my boots were new, I was a long time about putting them on, so long that all the other boys had left the house before I was ready. As soon as I found this, I rushed out, but could only see two of our boys, who were both running at full speed, and already a long way down the road. I hurried after them, but in a minute they had disappeared round a corner, and when I reached it were nowhere to be seen. There were half-a-dozen turnings, and I didn't know which to take to find my way to the Grammar School.

Here was a nice fix to be in? But it was no use to stand still, so, choosing the widest street I saw, I hastened along it, hoping that by good luck I might stumble upon the school. It was a long winding street, and I followed it for about five minutes, then went into a side street to examine a likely looking building, which turned out to be a Wesleyan chapel, then struck into a narrow lane, and was brought up by a river, then got into a labyrinth of courts and alleys; and, finally, found myself wandering about the streets of Whitminster without having the slightest idea of where I was, or in what direction I ought to go.

I should have asked my way of some one at the first, and now I was obliged to overcome my shyness, and accost a good-natured looking old gentleman.

"The way to the Grammar School? Why, my little man, you're going quite the wrong way just now. Go back to the end of this street, turn up the road to the right, then take the third turning to the left, go round the church and up Marten Street, and that will take you into the Minster Green, and there you'll see the Grammar School straight before you."

I thanked him, and tried to follow out his directions, but by the time I had got into the next street, I had forgotten whether it was the second or the third turning to the left that I was to take, and before long I was as much puzzled as ever. So I was once more obliged to ask a passing boy where the grammar-school was.

"The grammar-school!" he exclaimed, casting at me a glance of pity, not unmingled with contempt; "go straight on to the Minster, and you'll see it right opposite."

And with this lucid explanation he went on his way, leaving me not much wiser than before. In despair I walked on, not knowing where, and this time I was more lucky, for a turn of the street brought me into a grassy square, surrounded by great old trees, at the other end of which stood the biggest church I had ever seen in my life. This must be the Minster, I thought, and the grammar-school cannot be far off. And indeed, I had not gone half round the square when I came to a great stone gate, over which was carved:

"WHITMINSTER GRAMMAR SCHOOL,  
FOUNDED 1551."

Here I was at length, but how was I to go in and introduce myself? I entered through the gates, and found myself in a low cloister running round two sides of a gravelled playground. A flight of steps led up to a ponderous oaken door, and another flight descended to a subterraneous region beneath. Both from above and below, came a sound of boys' voices, showing that work had commenced, and here was I standing outside, not knowing which door to go in at, and not able to summon up resolution to try either.

At length I took heart, and mounting the stairs, knocked timidly at the upper door. There was no answer; indeed, the noise inside prevented my knock from being heard, and I was again deliberating what to do, when the door was flung open, and a boy bounced out.

"Hallo!" he said, pulling himself up short, and staring at me. "Why don't you go in? Where have you been?"

"I couldn't find my way to the school. What am I to do?"

"Go in there and speak to Mr Vials," and off he went, leaving me to undergo the trial of presenting myself in the schoolroom alone.

There was no help for it, so in I walked, and found myself in a large schoolroom full of boys. With the very unpleasant consciousness that everybody had turned to look at me, I was stumbling forward, when I was arrested by a sharp voice:

"Why, Smith, what have you been about?"

"I lost my way, sir, and couldn't find the school," stammered I, looking with a very red face towards Mr Vials, who sat enthroned in a desk near the door.

"Stupid fellow! you should have gone with the other boys. Go and speak to Mr Dalton there."

In still greater confusion I obeyed, and made my way between the rows of boys to the other end of the room. But here I met with a different reception. Another master, also a clergyman, who was sitting at the highest desk of all, came forward to meet me, and laid his hand kindly on my shoulder. Without waiting to be asked, this time, I plunged at once into the story of my misfortunes.

"Lost your way! never mind, you'll know the way here as well as any of us, in a day or two."

I ventured to peep up at Mr Dalton's face, and hoped he was going to be my master. But he called up one of the boys, and told him to take me to Mr Williamson.

I followed my conductor back to the door and down the steps on the outside into a dark passage, lighted even in the day-time by gas. At the end of this was a second door, and opening it we stood in another classroom, where about twenty-five boys were sitting on forms, and listening to a master, not a clergyman, who seemed to be reciting poetry. Just as we entered there was a roar of laughter.

Mr Williamson read a little note which Mr Dalton had written to introduce me, and then said, to my great



surprise, and the apparent amusement of the boy who had brought me :

"I am delighted to see you, Mr Smith. Take a seat here. You don't happen to be acquainted with the works of Shakespeare, do you?"

"No, sir."

"I think you would find that they possessed a good deal of merit. Now, Raby, what are you standing there grinning at?"

My conductor was hanging about the door, as if to see some fun ; but, at this hint, he took himself off, after winking at a friend of his, and Mr Williamson went on speaking to his form :

"Now, Lessing, go on. Art thou informed throughly of the cause ; which is the nominative here, and which the verb?"

A boy, who was standing up to construe—a funny-looking, dried-up sort of boy, with long yellow hair—stared at his book, and said nothing.

"Well, Lessing, shall we be beholden to thee?" said Mr Williamson, drumming impatiently with his fingers ; and then, as no answer came, he jumped up, shouting, "We trifle time, I pray thee pursue the sentence."

"I can't, sir," said Lessing, coolly. "I don't see the word which has to be taken in first."

"Why, then, thus it is," rejoined Mr Williamson, "you must prepare your fingers for my cane."

"Oh, no, sir, my hands are so cold," said Lessing, shuddering, and making a grimace ; but just then a

light dawned upon him, and pulling his hair violently with one hand, he plunged into the translation.

It may be imagined that I beheld all this with open eyes ; but Mr Williamson and his pupils seemed to be quite used to it.

"I am afraid this new boy thinks us all mad," said the master, observing my astonishment ; "but he'll soon find out that there's a good deal of method in our madness."

Now that he mentioned it, the idea did come into my mind that they were all a little mad. I could not see the jokes which seemed to amuse them so much. I had never even heard of the Merchant of Venice, nor for that matter had many of them till a week before, when they had been set passages out of it for repetition as a holiday task. Hence the occasion of Mr Williamson's burlesque quotations. By-the-bye I forgot to mention that my new master spoke in a very marked Irish accent, which made him seem more ridiculous.

Presently Lessing came to a dead-lock again, and tried to get out of the difficulty by sitting down, but Mr Williamson got behind him and poked him on his legs again with :

"Tarry a little ; there is something else." And then, as the boys below flourished their arms wildly in the air, and otherwise gave signal that they could answer, he went on : "But, soft ; Lessing shall have all justice ; soft, no haste. Now, Lessing, which word do you take in next."

Lessing scratched his head, and wagged it from side to side for about a minute, but could not answer. Down he went, place after place, to the very bottom of the class, till Mr Williamson seemed to lose patience with him, and exclaimed:

"You may as well go question with the ass. Aren't you ashamed of that answer you gave me just now, Lessing? Aren't you, you old humbug?"

Lessing looked slyly up out of his little twinkling eyes and said, gravely, "I am not bound to please thee with my answer."

The boys burst into a roar at this retort, but the master did not seem so well pleased, though he could scarcely help laughing.

"Look here, Lessing, this won't do, you know. You have been getting rather impudent for some time, and I must put a stop to it. I don't like this trying to be funny. I shall have to cane you, Master Lessing."

"When, sir?" said Lessing, in the same grave, respectful tone, and there was another burst of laughter.

"Now!" roared Mr Williamson, banging open the lid of his desk. "Come here, and I'll teach you to be impertinent."

Lessing deliberately walked forward and held out his hand. Mr Williamson raised the cane and gave him a sharp cut, but when he looked at the boy's face there was such a comic look of penitence and submission on it that he could not go on, and put the cane back into the desk. Lessing, without moving a muscle, stood still,

and kept holding up his hand. We all screamed with laughter louder than ever.

"What! Wouldst thou have a serpent sting thee twice?" said Mr Williamson, signing to Lessing to go back to his seat, which he did, and then carefully and slowly wiped away an imaginary tear from each eye with a very dirty pocket handkerchief. The master did not see this piece of pantomime, or it would perhaps have helped him to make up his mind whether to be more amused or angry at the boy's drollness.

"Just take warning now, Lessing," he said. "I don't like anybody here making fun except myself. It won't do to allow you to make these little jokes of yours. I have no doubt you are a very funny fellow, but we can't have it. In the language of the poet—

'It must not be,  
Or many an error by the same example  
Will creep into the state.'

But we must get on with our construing. Let me see. Who looks as if he hadn't learnt his lesson? *Brittanni*, the Britons; *arbitatri*, thinking; go on, Abbing."

The lesson now went on, but not without interruption. The boys had been worked up into a state of excitement, and it was not easy to get them cooled down again. They began to jump off their seats, and howl and laugh and kick with their feet, and punch their neighbours, and answer questions at random, and pay almost no attention to the master, who shouted and scolded and threatened in vain. He had raised a storm

which he did not seem able to lay; his good humour changed to crossness, and everything went wrong. At length he got into a regular rage, and banging down the book, ordered the whole form to write out the lesson, and dismissed us for a quarter of an hour's play.

"Well, what do you think of Williamson?" said Phillips, as we rushed along the dark passage leading to the playground. "Isn't he a mad fellow? But it's only sometimes that he goes on in the way he was doing to-day."

"He's an old fool," grumbled Kennedy Primus. "Here he's gone and given me an hour's detention for only knocking my brother's book out of his hand. It's always his fault when we kick up a row. He goes on humbugging, and then we begin to humbug, and then he begins to get into a wax and pitches into us. Whenever he's very jolly at the beginning of the day, he encourages us to get jolly too, and by the end he's turned as cross as two sticks."

"He's not so bad as some masters, though," said Phillips. "He never licks a fellow when he's in a wax."

"I wish he would lick a fellow and have done with it," growled Kennedy. "I had far rather be licked than kept in. If he would lick half-a-dozen of us we should soon stop making a row. It's all his fault for allowing us to do it."

"Poor Kangaroo Primus! is he going to be kept in?" cried Abbing, trying to jump on Kennedy's back and choke him; but that ill-used young gentleman pushed

him roughly away and stalked off with an air of offended dignity, though in two minutes I saw him shouting in a game of prisoner's base, as merrily as if the whole tribe of masters and punishments were at the bottom of the sea.

Phillips now took me under his wing, and while most of the other boys ran off to join some game, we walked round the playground and lounged at the railings separating it from the Minster Green. I felt obliged to him for his patronage, for he was a year or so older than myself, and he seemed to have taken a fancy to me. Before the bell called us into school again, he had put his arm round my neck, and intimated that we were to be great friends. He told me that he didn't like the other boys, but that I seemed to be a nicer sort of fellow, at which I was much flattered. He furthermore informed me that he was descended from Pope Gregory the Sixth, and that his grandfather was an archdeacon, and I received both these statements with becoming respect, though I hadn't a very clear idea what an archdeacon was, and had hitherto been accustomed to look upon all popes, this Gregory of course included, as extremely bad characters, who were chiefly noted for telling lies and burning people. Then he took out an orange and gave me half of it, and from that moment our friendship was sealed.



## CHAPTER IV.

### GETTING INTO A ROW.

**I**N a day or two I was quite at home at Whitminster grammar school, and after a few lessons from Phillips in the ways and habits of the place, began to feel myself a superior being among boys, and to wonder how existence could be tolerable in a poky little private school, where the master used a key to Henry's Exercises and the boys played at marbles. Luckily, Phillips had informed me that the Whitminster boys didn't play marbles before any of the others had seen the stock of alleys and taws, with which I had fondly hoped to make an impression of my wealth and taste. I begged him not to tell any one, and hiding away my hitherto cherished treasures in the lowest corner of my playbox, I hastened to put on a brazen face of disdain towards all such childish amusements.

Phillips managed to get me the desk next to his, and in it I arranged, with great pride and satisfaction, the pile of new books which I was speedily put in possession of

by Mr Williamson. In each of them I copied my name at least three times, and in my best hand, adding on the fly-leaf a legend, which seemed to be fashionable among my school-fellows. The authorship of it is unknown, but it used to strike us as embodying a very just moral sentiment, in most perspicuous and elevated language :

“ Black is the raven,  
Blacker is the rook,  
And blacker still the wicked boy  
Who steals this book.”

But, alas ! before one short month had rolled by, I had often wished that somebody would steal the whole lot of them, if by this I could be delivered from their tyranny.

At first I tried to do my lessons well, from a desire to please my masters. This didn't last long ; but there were obstacles in the way of idleness. I soon found out that Mr Williamson was by no means a person to be laughed at. He was a good master on the whole, and though he did not keep very good order always, he took care that you learned your lessons for him. There could be no humbugging him, no cramming up part of your repetition, and trusting not to be put on in the rest ; no looking-up of two or three of the longest and ugliest words in your construing, and trying to make a shot at the meaning. He soon saw if you hadn't tried your best, and then you knew what would happen. We didn't dislike him for being pretty strict in this way—indeed, we rather boasted about him to boys of other forms where things were taken more quietly, and looked down



with great contempt upon masters who let us off too easily, or who were always threatening to do something and didn't do it. But, oh! what bitter sighs I can remember myself breathing forth over some disgustingly irregular verb which had to be learned for next day, or, if not, duly written out twice or thrice in my neatest hand. And that beast τυπτω! Every word of him is engraved in my mind at this day; but how I did hate him once, while he was being drummed into my empty head—not without practical, convincing, and, I may even say, striking examples of his meaning and use.

With Mr Williamson I got on pretty well, but not equally so with all the masters. In mathematics my form were with Mr Vialls, and I cannot say that he taught us much. He was just as severe as Mr Williamson, and more cross, but, then, there was a difference. Mr Williamson always took a great deal of pains to explain everything to us, and if we didn't listen to him it was our fault. He never punished us for not understanding, but only for not trying to understand. Mr Vialls didn't take half so much pains to explain things to us, but he seemed to expect us to understand everything at once, and stormed at and bullied us because we were not so clever as he was. Bellowing at boys, and boxing their ears, may serve to relieve a master's feelings, but certainly don't make stupid pupils any wiser.

Mr Bentley was supposed to teach us French, and was quite willing and able to do so if we had condescended to learn. But I am afraid we looked upon his class as

an amusing interval between our serious labours. There weren't five boys in the form who even tried to learn their lessons for him at home. When we came up to say them, and didn't say them, we listened very gravely to his remonstrances, and allowed him to construe to us while we chattered and played tricks on each other. Then we would be sent down to our desks to write a French exercise, and after scribbling half-a-dozen lines for the sake of appearances, we would begin to amuse ourselves in different ways.

The day after my arrival I was summoned to the presence of the headmaster. This was an honour seldom granted except to new boys who had just arrived, or very naughty ones who were going to be expelled, and I was duly sensible of the importance of the occasion—indeed, I was so overwhelmed by awe, that I cannot remember much about the interview. I was ushered into the dread audience-chamber, and had a dim consciousness of the presence of an old gentleman reading the newspaper in an arm-chair, who looked at me, and said he hoped I was to be a credit to the school. To this I muttered some unintelligible answer, and was led forth by Mr Vialls into the abodes of men. I had ascended Olympus, and gazed upon Jupiter, and was restored unharmed.

It was Mr Vialls with whom we had most to do, as he bore rule over Dr Pearson's boarders, who formed no inconsiderable portion of the whole school. We were almost as afraid of him as if he had been a real head-

master, but we didn't like him. Before long I fell into his clutches, and I am now going to give a full, true, and particular account of the first scrape which I got into at Whitminster Grammar School.

"Vialls is out," said Phillips, one night as we were going to bed. "He has gone to dine with my grandfather, and he is safe not to be back till after ten. Let us have a row to-night, Kennedy."

"Oh, yes!"

Kennedy Primus looked doubtful. He was the captain of the room, and responsible for our going to bed quietly. But the temptation was very strong.

"Are you sure he's out?"

Just then the door opened, and a very odd figure appeared at it, namely, Lessing, dressed in his night shirt, and with his long hair tumbling over his eyes.

"Gentlemen," he said, bowing till his head nearly touched the ground, "the dormitories below will be happy to give you the pleasure of having the honour of a pillow fight with us," and then he disappeared with great rapidity, to escape a slipper which Abbing threw at him.

"Hooroosh!" shouted Kennedy, "We're game! Come along, you fellows," and, snatching up his pillow, he bounced out, followed by the rest of us.

We were not a moment too soon, for the boys of the lower dormitory had followed close behind their ambassador and were silently creeping up the stairs to take us by surprise. But Lessing fled with such haste before

our sudden advance, that he ran violently against the leaders of his friends, who, falling back, knocked down the boys behind them, and the whole body rolled ignominiously down the narrow staircase, amid a peal of laughter from our side.

“Charge!” shouted Kennedy. “On them before they can get up, and take their dormitory by assault,” and down we rushed like an avalanche upon the discomfited ranks of the foe, and, bursting through, made a charge for the door of the dormitory.

But they had taken precautions against such a misfortune ; for forth sallied a reserve of two big fellows, one of whom soon brought our champion to the ground, while the other dealt swift destruction to us smaller fry. And then their main body, having by this time regained their legs, attacked us from behind, and cut off our chance of flight.

“In apertos undique campos

Prosiliunt hostes, et latus omne tenent.

Quid faciant pauci contra tot millia fortes ?”

They outnumbered us by two to one ; for now that they seemed to have the advantage, reinforcements came pouring up of faint-hearted warriors who had hung back till they saw which way the victory was going to lie. But we fought desperately, getting our backs to the wall, and laying about us sturdily with shouts of glee and defiance. Fortune favoured us ; night and the Prussians arrived together to our aid, for by a blow from a pillow the gas lamp was put out, and at the

same moment a door at the end of the passage was flung open, and the war-cry of another dormitory rang in our ears.

The battle now became fiercer than ever. The new comers dashed into the *melée*, and in the darkness hit about them at random. Down went a dozen boys rolling over each other in an indiscriminate mass, and struggled and screamed and were belaboured by friends and foes. Mingled with the groans of the half-choked and the shouts of the champions, was a sound as of ripping of pillow-cases and shirts; but we were too excited to care. I was jammed up against a door, and my shoulder bruised by the corner of it, but I scarcely felt the pain.

Suddenly there is a lull in the noise of the battle, and voices are heard exclaiming, "Go it!" "Give it him!" "That's a good one!" The hostile ranks disengage, and we crowd towards a window at the end of the passage, by the dim light of which two small boys have got to fisticuffs, and are hitting out in earnest. But before they have time to do each other much mischief, the door again opens, and a shrill voice of remonstrance is heard.

"Never mind," called Kennedy to some of the boys who had retreated to the stairs at the sight of a candle; "it's only Mrs Bramble."

At this the fugitives, who had expected to face Mr Vials, returned, and Mrs Bramble, the housekeeper, advanced, quite regardless of the extreme state of undress in which most of us were, and scolding, appealing, and

threatening, tried to drive us back to bed. She was reinforced by two or three of the study boys; and besides, we were not insensible to the force of her threat to tell Mr Vialls, so we gathered up our weapons, and unwillingly retreated from the field of battle.

But we were too excited to sleep. Some of the boys lay down in their beds, but four or five of us lit the gas, and began to partake of the pleasures of the chase. I think I have already mentioned that Harry Kennedy, big Kennedy's younger brother, was called the Kangaroo, partly from his agility in jumping, and partly from another reason which I may perhaps tell you some day. So, when we had a kangaroo hunt, as we called it, the fun was for Kennedy to go galloping round the room on his hands and knees, two or three other boys following him as hounds, while the rest were mounted on each other's backs, and were supposed to be huntsmen. On this occasion I was mounted on George Kennedy, and Abbing on Phillips, and we could only muster one dog. Round and round the room we went, flying and shouting. The Kangaroo dived, dodged, and doubled, and we had to follow his track exactly, which of course made it no easy task to catch him. Every time that he went underneath a bed, we had to get over it, and the result of this was generally that rider and horse rolled on the ground. As soon as our prey saw us thus encumbered, he turned on the unfortunate dog, and worried him, and then bounded off again when he saw that we had remounted our steeds.

The chase was long and exciting, and we could not catch hold of the nimble Kangaroo, so Abbing resorted to the unsportsmanlike conduct of throwing a brush at him, as he turned to bay in a corner.

"Oh!" I say, "that's not fair," cried Kennedy, rubbing his back.

"Of course it is," said Abbing. "It wouldn't be a regular kangaroo hunt if we weren't allowed to use fire-arms. Come along, now, we have him."

"Have you!" shouted the Kangaroo, making a spring at Abbing, and dragging him from his horse.

"Oh, look out! you're choking me," gasped Abbing. "Rescue! Rescue!"

"Of course I am. It wouldn't be a regular kangaroo hunt if I wasn't allowed to choke you and tear you with my paws."

I had picked up a slipper and was taking aim for a splendid shot at Kennedy, before making a final rush. But just then he released Abbing and ducked down. My slipper whizzed over his head and went smash through the window.

"Whew! you have done it!" exclaimed Abbing. "It wasn't my fault, mind. You must tell Vialls that you did it."

"All right!" said I, looking rather crestfallen. This little accident put a damper on our spirits. We stopped running about and were beginning to get into bed, when a heavy footstep was heard on the stairs.

"Put out the gas," cried Kennedy, in a loud whisper;

but it was too late. Phillips, whose bed was nearest the lamp, had half sprung out to do it, but hesitated and lay down again: and the door opened and Mr Vials appeared with his hat and greatcoat on, as if he had just come in.

He looked suspiciously round and said:

"Why is the gas lit here, Kennedy?" I had made up my mind to get over my confession with a rush, so just as he began to speak I said:

"Please sir, I have broken a window." I did not speak very loud and he did not hear me; you may fancy that I was rather disgusted, if you know what an effort it generally costs small schoolboys to make such an announcement.

"Why is this gas lit?" repeated Mr Vials, addressing Kennedy, who hadn't a word to say, and could only look at the gas as if he were surprised to see it lighted.

"Where is Kennedy Secundus?" asked Mr Vials going on with his survey; and then for the first time we saw that the Kangaroo's bed was empty.

"I'm here, sir," said Kennedy, popping out from beneath a neighbouring bed.

We were so tickled by the suddenness of his appearance that we could scarcely keep from laughing, and even Mr Vials seemed amused.

"Get into bed at once," he said, "you will have yourself to blame if you are laid up with a bad cold to-morrow."

As the Kangaroo scrambled into bed, I judged it a



fit moment for calling attention to my own misdeeds; so I again lifted up my voice, a little louder this time :

"Please, sir, I've broken this window."

"Oh!" said Mr Vials. He had a way of saying "oh!" and nothing else: but then he said it in a tone which meant a great deal, and thus it was almost as expressive as Lord Burleigh's celebrated nod.

"I suppose the fact is that you have been making a disturbance. I thought I heard a noise from one of the rooms as I came up stairs. Was it yours?"

"We were running about," answered Kennedy.

"Oh!"

"It was only some of us, though, sir; some were in bed."

"Well, give me, to-morrow morning, the names of all those who were making a noise just now," and Mr Vials put out the gas and went away.

"I say, we're in for it," whispered Harry Kennedy, as soon as the master was out of hearing. "But wasn't it a splendid joke me being beneath the bed? I nearly burst out laughing when I heard old Vials asking where I was."

It certainly was rather ludicrous, but I, for one, felt more inclined to take a serious view of what had happened, and of what was going to happen.

"What will be done to us?"

"Aha! Swish!" exclaimed a boy called Wood, with great relish. I needn't remark that he wasn't one of those who had been making the row, so that the subject

naturally presented itself to him in a more amusing light than it did to us. "Swish" was a word which had not been in our vocabulary at Mr Brown's, but from the sound I had no difficulty in guessing the sense, and was speedily further enlightened.

"Six on the back," interpreted the Kangaroo. "And my thick jacket has gone to be mended. What a bother. Vialls does know how to cane."

"Couldn't we put copy books up our backs?" I suggested, rather appalled by his evident admiration of Mr Vialls' prowess.

"Oh, yes! I should like to see you try it."

"Bags me to go in last," said Phillips. "He'll have to go over five of you, and then he'll be pretty well tired out by the time he comes to me."

"Oh! I say, Kennedy," whimpered Abbing, "what's the use of giving up all our names. It was Harry and Smith, who were making the row really, and I don't see why we need all be got into it."

"Bosh!" exclaimed Kennedy, contemptuously. "We were all making just as much row, and we must all take the consequences. That's like you, Abbing. So long as there's any fun going on, you're a fine fellow to join it, and when it comes to taking a licking it's another story. What a muff you are!"

"I wish the cane hurt you as much as it did me. It's all very well for a big fellow like you."

"Well, there's my brother; he's no bigger than you, and you don't hear him making such a work when he

has got into a scrape. Now, you fellows, don't you think there has been enough noise for one night? Let's get to sleep."

We felt inclined to agree with him, and stopped talking. I don't know if the others went to sleep immediately, but I can answer for it that one boy lay awake for some time, wondering if he would get a good caning, and if he would be able to bear it without crying out.

Next morning, there was a good-humoured dispute among us about the order in which our names should be sent in to Mr Vials. It was astonishing how modest we were about being put first on the list, for we had an idea that the individual so honoured would be likely to come in for the full vigour of Mr Vials' arm. The matter was settled by Kennedy writing his own name first, Harry and I volunteered to come next, and Abbing was allowed to be last.

The list was sent, and we remained in expectation of being summoned forth to execution. I was anxious to have it over, and yet afraid to face it. But Mr Vials had a trick of keeping you waiting a day and sometimes longer for your punishment, which was thus doubled. I did use to hate those delays. The looking forward to such inflictions is half the pain. This time we were kept in suspense all day, and an abominable suspense it was.

I don't think Kennedy Primus did care much, he was pretty well used to it; and as for the Kangaroo, it would have taken a great many canings to prevent him from laughing and jumping and being happy. But, though

Phillips and I tried to pretend that we didn't care, that was all humbug ; and, as for Abbing, there could be no mistake as to his being in a great funk. All his jokes and antics disappeared, and he was as quiet as a mouse the whole day. We three talked over the matter while we were supposed to be doing our French exercises, and by way of comfort, partook of sips from a bottle of Harvey's sauce which Phillips kept in his desk.

It's all very well for grown-up people to laugh at these little troubles of ours. Before you got these long whisks, my friend, you had little troubles of this kind, which then seemed great ones. I should like to know what you would think of a caning even now? The other day you didn't feel at all comfortable when you were going to get a tooth pulled, and I believe you made the dentist give you chloroform after all. We didn't have chloroform ; and taking everything into consideration, we weren't a bit more nervous than you. Of course, it is supposed and duly stated in various dramatic stories of school life, that brave boys are quite indifferent to the most dreadful punishments. Doubtless there are a few boys who, luckily for themselves, have by nature or experience come to this pitch of stoical virtue. There are many others who will bite their lips and bear bravely up against the pain, rather than do or say anything which they think dishonourable or unmanly. But it is nonsense to say that most boys are not afraid of a caning. I don't know that I minded so much when it came suddenly upon me, and there was no time to think

about it, but I am certain that it was a most disagreeable thing to have to look forward to in cool blood.

It was not till evening that we were sent for to Mr Vialls' room, to be "put out of pain," as Lessing told us, with cruel irony ; and as we went off in mournful procession, we were regarded with great interest and sympathy by the rest of the boarders.

"Never mind, the cane won't kill you," remarked Wood, in an encouraging manner.

"Oh, yes !" replied Abbing, half crying. "You wouldn't talk in that way if you were going to have it yourself"—which was true enough.

My heart beat as we entered the presence of Mr Vialls, and I looked anxiously to see what sort of a cane it was to be. But to our great relief, and perhaps to the disappointment of some readers who have been expecting an exciting scene of suffering and boyish fortitude, we found we weren't going to be caned after all. Mr Vialls didn't seem to be particularly angry. He only scolded us a little for being out of bed after the proper hour, and sentenced each to have an hour's detention. Kennedy, as being captain of the room, was dealt with more severely ; he was to have three hours. I was to pay for the window I had broken, out of my pocket money, which I didn't much care for, as I had still some of the money I had brought from home.

We returned to the boys' room in very much better spirits than we had left it ; and indeed we had scarcely put the door between ourselves and Mr Vialls, before

Abbing cut a caper, and looked as jovial as if he had never had a tear in his eye. It was wonderful to see the sudden way in which he bloomed forth again when the storm had passed over our heads.

"Now, you'll see how I shall humbug the other fellows," he informed us, and putting his handkerchief to his eyes, he pretended to be crying.

The rest of us entered into the joke, and we appeared before our companions, writhing and groaning most piteously.

"Hallo! have you had it?" and there was a rush towards us.

"I should rather say so. Oh! oh!"

"How many?"

"Twelve each," moaned Abbing. "Oh, don't touch my shoulder. The skin is broken all over it. You can't think how it hurts."

"I am all bleeding, and my shirt is sticking to my back," declared Phillips.

"But you have only been gone three minutes. He couldn't have had time to lick you all."

"He had Williamson and Dalton to help him, and they took us three by three in separate corners of the room. It's a beastly shame."

"But that isn't all," blubbered Phillips. "We're to be expelled. What are we to do?"

"No!"

"And we're to be thrashed every day for a week. I believe I shall run away."

At this point, the Kangaroo's weeping was discovered to be very like laughing, and a shout of derision arose from our audience.

"I suppose you thought we would believe all these crams?" said Wood.

"You did believe them, at all events," retorted Abbing. "I say, I think Vialls must have come into a fortune. I never saw him in such a good humour before. He has only given us an hour's detention."

"Ah, ha! You didn't tell him about the pillow fight?"

"Yes; it's all very well for you fellows," said Kennedy Primus, who had just come into the room. "You've got off easy; but he has given me three hours, and he kept me behind the rest, and gave me a most beastly jaw. He says it is very dishonourable of me to join in these rows. I wish he'd keep his names to himself. I'm just as honourable as he is. If I want to have some fun, there's nothing dishonourable about that, and if he can catch me at it he may pitch into me as much as he likes, and I won't make any fuss about it. Only I wish he wouldn't jaw me. I hate jawing."

"I thought he was going to lick you, Kennedy, when he kept you behind."

"I wish he had licked me, and have done with it. I can't stand being kept in for three hours; and besides, the fellows are going to buy the bats for the cricket club to-morrow, and I shan't be able to go with them."

"I should think he'd let you stay in another day, if you tell him that."

"I'll go halves with you, if you like, George," said his brother.

"No, thank you, Harry. It's Vialls' week to keep detention, and he never allows one fellow to stay in for another. There's no use asking him to let me off. But I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll get another hour before to-morrow, and then he'll have to thrash me. I'll forget my exercise for Williamson, or I'll break an ink bottle, or do something."

I must here make a digression about the laws and customs of Whitminster Grammar School. One of the chief punishments was detention on half-holiday afternoons, which were superintended by each of the masters in turn. These detentions lasted for three hours, and occasionally a boy's name had been put down for four or more hours. The different masters had different ways of disposing of this difficulty. Mr Vialls' usual way was not a very happy one. If a boy had more than three hours' detention he caned him and let him off. There were plenty of boys in the school who would rather have had a caning than stop in a whole half holiday. So, if they got three hours, it was their interest to get more, and they were not sorry to fall into some fresh scrape; though prudent speculators of this class generally waited to see if the detention day was to be wet or fine. Then they took their caning more or less philosophically, as the case might be, and went off looking very much impressed, but really laughing in their sleeves at having managed to escape staying in.



I don't know whether Kennedy would have really done any mischief to get another hour's detention. But it so fell out that the same evening he was reported by the housekeeper for making a noise at tea. Next morning he was sent for by Mr Vialls, and went off very well satisfied with the idea that he was going to "get it over."

But he returned looking wonderfully blank, and announcing that Mr Vialls had "sold" him in a most disgusting manner.

"Hang his good humour! He blew me up for getting into scrapes, and then I thought he was going to cane me; but the donkey said that he would let me off this time, and that I should only stay in for three hours, and have my pocket-money stopped! He said he hoped I should not make him repent of his leniency. If that's what he calls leniency—— Beast!"

So poor Kennedy didn't get any pocket-money that week, and had to stop in all detention time, which made him dreadfully wroth. We were not sure whether this was a smart trick on the part of Mr Vialls, or whether he really thought that he was doing a kindness to the boy. But I believe Kennedy never tried to get extra detention again.





## CHAPTER V.

### A NEW FRIEND.

**W**HITMINSTER is not at present the seat of a bishop's see, but the venerable building from which it takes its name is as large as some, and as ancient as most of our cathedrals. On Sundays the Grammar School boys attended the morning and evening services at the Minster ; and I can well remember the astonishment with which I first entered the great nave, and gazed up at the pointed arches and fretted roof. A great contrast did the richly ornamented chancel present to our dusty white-washed parish church at home. How I stared with wonder at the bedesmen and bedeswomen sitting on opposite sides in their quaint gowns ! Then the organ pealed out a voluntary ; the choir, chiefly composed of Grammar School boys, filed two by two into their places ; the minor canons followed ; last of all came the rector, whom I beheld with as much respect and admiration as if he had been an actual bishop.

We were outwardly devout at these services—no one in my time ever said that our boys as a rule behaved badly in the Minster. But I think now with regret of the hours of thoughtless vacuity which I and many others passed in that sacred building. God was near to us in these days—as near as to our grave masters, and the surpliced clergy. But far, far too seldom did we try to draw near to Him, and to lift up our hearts as well as our voices.

After dinner, we were allowed to go and walk where we pleased, and boys generally took this opportunity of having a talk with their most intimate friends. To go a walk with a fellow on Sunday was understood in the light of a declaration of friendship. On my first Sunday, I went out with Phillips, and we discoursed lovingly together in the manner of schoolboy inseparables. Phillips described his sisters to me, and informed me that one of them had written a poem in a magazine. He also bragged a good deal about his family, and told me some wonderful stories of his ancestors—so wonderful, indeed, that I looked upon them as suspicious. I told him in return all about my home, and my pony, and my companions, and promised to ask him to come and stay with me in the holidays, if my father would allow me. Besides, not to be outdone in the matter of ancestors, I related to him the celebrated family tale about my grandfather finding two burglars in the house one night, and valiantly setting them to flight with the kitchen poker. Furthermore, we agreed that he should call me

"Bob," and that I should call him "Everard." Then we lay down under the shade of a spreading beech—only, by-the-bye, there weren't any leaves on it—and discoursed sweetly together, till we found it growing rather cold, and went home to tea.

But this affection had bloomed forth too suddenly to last. I soon began to grow rather tired of my beloved Everard, and all his fine stories about his grandfather the archdeacon, and his ancestor Pope Gregory the Sixth. He wasn't a bad sort of fellow in his way, but to tell the truth, he was rather lazy, and greedy, and girlish, and looked upon by the other boys as a bit of a muff: so when, on my third Sunday at Whitminster, Abbing asked me to have a walk with him, I consented, and when Phillips came running up to join me, as if it were quite a matter of course, I told him that I was going with Abbing.

"Won't you come with us?" I said, seeing that he looked disappointed.

"Very well," he answered; but I saw that he didn't seem pleased. Of course, Abbing immediately began to tease him.

"Come along, Jemima; pretty Jemima! We'll look after you, Jemima, dear! and bring you safe home again."

"I wish you wouldn't call me Jemima, Abbing," said Phillips, pettishly.

"Oh! I am so sorry; I beg your pardon. Did we not call it by its full name? Pretty Jemima Ann! Pretty Jemima Ann! Everardina!"

"You might stop your nonsense on Sunday, at all events," cried Phillips, getting quite angry, and all the more so as he saw me laughing.

"Let bears and lions bark and bite," said Abbing, making a face. "But children you should never—." Here he tumbled back into the hedge to escape a blow which Phillips aimed at him.

"I can't stand this. Will you come and walk with me, Bob, and leave that vulgar fellow to go by himself."

"I have promised to go with Abbing."

"Oh, very well," said Phillips, in a tone of offended dignity, and turning on his heel he walked off.

"There! We're rid of Her Royal Highness," said Abbing, picking himself out of the hedgerow. "Now you'll see she'll be in the sulks, and won't speak to you for ever so long."

"Oh, I dare say he'll be all right to-morrow morning."

"Not a bit of her. I never saw such a hand at making friends, and at quarrelling with them as Miss Jemima. She is all kissing and giggling with a fellow one week, and hates him the next like poison. I should say she has had a dozen bosom friends this half already, and quarrelled with them all."

And when we came back I found that he was right. Phillips put on an air of offended dignity and would not speak to me, so I didn't offer to speak to him, and to show how little I cared for the honour of his friendship, I made a great show of taking up with Abbing, though I really didn't like him a bit. Nobody did, I believe ;

but he was certainly very amusing, and till you knew him thoroughly, he seemed to be a spirited, friendly sort of fellow. But this was a mistake. You soon found out what all his fine talk meant. He was a great hand at bragging and chattering, but he was selfish, deceitful, and cowardly. Still, impudence among boys covers a multitude of sins, and, for a time, I made Abbing my companion and counsellor. It was always my nature to lean on and imitate some one else.

This being my disposition, I got no good from Abbing. I don't think I was naturally deceitful. At Mr Brown's school no very lofty idea had prevailed about honour, but on coming to Whitminster, I was fully prepared to accept the higher standard which I found among some of the boys there. I saw and admired the truthfulness and frankness of the Kennedys, and would have imitated them. But from Abbing I heard and listened to the old lies, that boys may cheat and masters be cheated; that a clever falsehood is a good joke; that wilfulness and indulgence are the aims of life, to be cheaply bought at the price of honour and true courage.

I don't wish to dwell on this subject. There are some parts of my school life which were bright and happy; these I shall ever look back to with pleasure. There were others in which I do not feel such satisfaction. Then I didn't think much of doing my lessons dishonestly and deceiving my masters; now I feel thoroughly ashamed of having done so. Even then I was not inclined to do these things; I followed the

example of others who would have laughed at me if I had shown more conscientiousness. But, alas for weak human nature in boys and men! We may be willing to take a brave and honest course, to do the thing that is right, and despise the thing that is wrong; but the jest or sneer of some pitiful little coward is enough to frighten us out of our better nature.

Soon after my intimacy with Abbing began, a thing occurred which rather disgusted me with him and with myself. One half-holiday, he and Harry Kennedy and I happened to be strolling home from the cricket field, and Kennedy said,—

“I wish we might go down to Matthews’. I want to buy some chocolate.”

“Let’s go,” proposed Abbing, pricking up his ears at the mention of this delicacy.

“But it’s out of bounds, isn’t it? Vialls said the other day that Marten Street was to be out of bounds.”

“Never mind. No one will see us, and there’s plenty of time before tea.”

“All right,” assented Kennedy; and looking round to see that none of the masters or monitors were in sight, we slipped down a narrow lane and made our way to a confectioner’s shop in Marten Street, where Kennedy bought sixpenceworth of chocolate, and, of course, imparted thereof to us as companions in his adventure.

But as we were lounging back, eating the chocolate, we suddenly came right upon Mr Dalton at a corner.

There was no time to get out of the way, and we walked up to him, trusting that he would not know that we were out of bounds, as, of course, this rule was only for the Headmaster's boarders, with whom none of the masters but Mr Vialls had anything to do.

"I am glad I have met you, boys," said Mr Dalton, stopping, as we touched our caps. "Will one of you give Mr Vialls a message from me?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ask him if he can lend me the fifth volume of 'Macaulay's History.' I should be very much obliged if he could send it me to-night. Say that I was coming myself to ask for it, but that I had to go to meet a friend at the station."

"Very well, sir," and we walked on.

"I say, we are in for it," exclaimed Kennedy, looking blank. "If Vialls asks us where we met Mr Dalton, what are we to say?"

"Say we met him on the Nashley Road," proposed Abbing. "That's in bounds, and Vialls will think we were coming home that way from the field."

"But perhaps Dalton may tell him afterwards where he met us," I suggested.

"Never mind; we'll chance it."

"I sha'n't," said Kennedy. "I'll tell him the truth if he asks me."

"Sha'n't we just catch it then! Vialls caned two fellows last week for being out of bounds. I say, Kangaroo, you surely aren't going to be such a fool!"



"I won't tell a lie about it."

"What a scrape we are in!" exclaimed Abbing, in a tone of disgust. "Confound Dalton for dropping on us in this beastly way!"

"I suppose that it's our own fault for being out of bounds."

"Hang it, Kennedy, I don't see what harm there would be in saying we were on the Nashley Road."

"We weren't," said Kennedy, biting another piece of chocolate.

"We needn't say where we were," I proposed; "and perhaps Vialls won't ask us."

"He's sure to," said Abbing. "He's always asking questions, Vialls is. Bags me not to take the message."

It wasn't me he gave it to," said I. "He looked at Kennedy."

"Oh, I see," said Kennedy. "You two want to shift the whole scrape on to me."

"No, we don't. We only want you not to get us into a scrape."

"I tell you I won't tell a lie about it," repeated Kennedy, warmly. "I think we should all go and give Vialls the message, and if he asks us, we must say that we were out of bounds. If we don't, I shall be in a funk that he'll find out, for the next week."

"You can go and tell him if you like. I sha'n't. After all, it was you that Dalton spoke to, and I don't see what we have to do with it. Of course, you won't split on us."

" You needn't be afraid. If you don't choose to tell about yourselves I shan't. I'll go and take the message, and I shan't say a word about you being with me."

There was a touch of scorn in his tone which made me feel ashamed of myself. But Abbing did not seem ashamed, and Mr Vialls' cane was reported to be very large and thick ; so I persuaded myself that there was no use of being over-scrupulous, and allowed Kennedy to go off to Mr Vialls alone. I dare say he was not without misgivings, but he didn't seem a bit afraid, and I admired him from the bottom of my heart.

The interview between him and Mr Vialls was not long. In a few minutes he came back into the boys' room, where we were all very anxious to know what would happen to him. The other boys had been told the facts of the case, and we had the satisfaction of hearing from them that they didn't think much of us for backing out of the scrape.

" Has he licked you ?" exclaimed his brother, as the Kangaroo appeared among us again.

" No. He did ask where I had met Mr Dalton, and at first I thought he was going to be waxy ; but then he said that as I had told him the truth about it, he would let me off with learning some lines. Lend me an ' Ovid,' will you ? I've got to go back and have them set."

" It's all his own fault," said Abbing, when Kennedy had left the room again. " I don't see the use of going telling on himself. He might have given the message

to one of the servants, and Vialls would have asked nothing more about it."

"Of course, you don't see the use of it," said George Kennedy, sharply. "But Harry isn't a sneak like you two fellows, who get into a scrape, and leave him to get you out of it."

"I didn't want him to get me out of the scrape. But I don't see that we ought to be too honourable."

"Oh, you needn't trouble yourself. Everybody knows that you are not too honourable," said Kennedy, and there was a laugh at Abbing's expense, which nettled him into saying—

"It's all very fine to talk about honour, but I dare say he only did it to suck up and make Vialls think him a very fine fellow."

"What's that you say?" exclaimed George Kennedy, turning round upon him. "If you say again that my brother sucks up to any master, I'll give you the most tremendous thrashing you ever had, Master Abbing; there now!"

And on the whole, Abbing thought it advisable not to say it again—at least not in hearing of the wrathful George Kennedy, for the strength of whose arms he had a very great respect.

I would now have given anything to have taken courage to act as Harry Kennedy had done, even though I had been caned. I felt that our conduct seemed mean beside his. My love of approbation, too, reproached me for having lost such a chance of making the other

boys think me a fine, manly fellow, who wasn't afraid of a licking. And after all, Abbing and I suffered a worse punishment than half-a-dozen canings ; for it was suggested to us that Mr Dalton might possibly mention to Mr Vialls that he had met three boys in the town, and for days we were in dread of being sent for and told that we had been found out ; in which case we knew that we could expect neither mercy from our master, nor sympathy from our companions.

"Oh yes ! it's all very well for them to say that we are sneaks," whined Abbing, as we were trying to comfort each other in this disagreeable position. "But most of them wouldn't have done anything else if they had got the chance. No fellow likes to get a licking if he can help it. And do you hear that sulky fellow Jemima saying that we ought to be sent to Coventry ? That's just spite !"





## CHAPTER VI.

### STAYING IN.

**P**HILLIPS did not long continue his grand air of displeasure towards me, though we stopped calling each other "Bob" and "Everard" for the future. And before long we got into a scrape together, an event which often serves to heal the ranklings of schoolboy quarrels.

One morning, Mr Williamson was obliged to go away somewhere or other, and Mr Bentley took our form. We did not care much for Mr Bentley, as I have already hinted, and I am afraid we were often impertinent to him. He seldom punished—the boys said it was because he wore a wig, and was afraid of its tumbling off if he thrashed us. His disposition was too mild and good-natured to make him a good schoolmaster, and he did not understand the tricks of boys.

So you may imagine his nervousness when he found himself shut up with our form in Mr Williamson's classroom, not knowing how to manage us, or what work to

do with us. Lessing said he looked like Daniel in the lions' den.

"Now, let us begin our work," he said, when, after much trouble, he had persuaded us to sit down in our places.

"Isn't it lovely weather, sir?" remarked Lessing.

"Yes. What lesson does Mr Williamson take first?"

Here we all bawled out at the pitch of our voices, some one thing and some another, till Mr Bentley ordered silence, and appealed to Abbing, who, for a wonder, happened to be top-boy of the form that morning.

"What is the first subject?"

"Oh, nothing particular, sir," said Abbing, who was minded to display his wit with impunity at Mr Bentley's expense.

"The crops are looking well, aren't they, sir?" said Lessing. "I quite envy Mr Williamson his journey this fine day."

"Yes—probably—but——"

"Is there any news in the papers, sir?" continued Lessing.

"But what lesson ——?"

"Oh, we are not particular. Are we, you fellows?" said Abbing, appealing to the form.

"Really, I have no time to waste. Will no one tell me what the lesson is?"

"History," bawled a chorus of voices, and Phillips, rising from his seat, gave Mr Bentley a book, and showed him the place.

"Oh!—ah!—yes! thank you. Now—I think your name is Abbing?"

"That's what most of the fellows call me, sir."

Mr Bentley cast on Abbing a look which was intended to be very stern, and went on to ask:

"Explain what Magna Charta is."

"That's easier said than done, sir," said Abbing, scratching his head. "If you will give me the book, I will tell you."

"Why? Haven't you learned your lesson this morning?"

"Oh, yes! As well as usual, at least."

Here there was a titter, and Mr Bentley looked annoyed. But he put on a benevolent smile, hoping thus to win the boys' confidence, and passed the question to Lessing.

"Will you tell me what Magna Charta is?"

"A mineral," answered Lessing, promptly.

"Nonsense! Magna Charta is the name of an enactment which—"

"Well, sir, that's what I said," interrupted Abbing; "at least I was going to say that, if you had given me time."

"Oh, yes! very like a whale, Abbing!" cried Lessing. "Please, sir, shouldn't Abbing go down a place for telling lies?"

Mr Bentley pretended not to hear this, and was passing the question down the form, when Abbing exclaimed,—

"Oh, sir! please tell Lessing to be quiet. He's pinching me, and I can't attend."

"Don't believe him, sir. Do you know the difference between Abbing and an ass, sir? Because I don't. There isn't any, sir."

"Silence!" cried Mr Bentley, as loudly and fiercely as he could. "I will not have this."

The boys were all laughing, jumping from their seats, and otherwise conducting themselves lawlessly, but now most of them began to perceive that things were going too far, and a certain amount of order being restored, the lesson proceeded after a fashion.

But our two buffoons were irrepressible. Abbing got up on pretence of fetching a book, and as he crossed the room, made a great chalk mark on Mr Bentley's back, which was regarded as an exquisite joke. Then Lessing suddenly jumped up, and interrupted the proceedings by—

"Please, sir, let us talk in Latin. The old rules of the Grammar School say we are to talk nothing but Latin in school and street. Do let us speak Latin now, and then I shall get above Abbing. *Mens tuus oculus, Abbing, tu asine!*"

"You had better take care," said Mr Bentley, turning round and addressing Lessing in what was meant to be a very impressive tone. "I shall send you to Mr Dalton, if you interrupt me again."

"Oh, no, sir; please don't, and I will be good," said Lessing, very penitently; but even he thought it as well to subdue his spirits for a little.



So he stopped trying to be funny, and presently began to shoot barley about the room from a small watch-spring gun. Two or three more of us joined in this amusement, and growing bold by impunity, were in the middle of a hot bombardment, when, unluckily, a random shot hit Mr Bentley on the face.

"This—this—this is impertinence," he stuttered, fairly losing his temper. "Stand up the boys who are shooting peas about."

Lessing and Phillips stood up; then I followed their example, and two or three boys looked at Abbing, who, however, kept his seat.

"Were you not one?" said Mr Bentley to him.

"No, sir."

"Oh!" exclaimed Lessing and George Kennedy, in one breath.

"I am afraid you are telling me a falsehood. What is that you have in your hand?"

"Well, I wasn't shooting *peas*," said Abbing, very unwillingly, producing a quill, through which he had been spouting barley.

"You are only equivocating, you cowardly boy. I can't have this. I am not going to be insulted," said Mr Bentley, in a tone which seemed half-angry, half-frightened.

"Please, sir, it was me that hit you. It was an accident, sir. I was firing at Smith," explained Lessing.

"Yes; but I can't allow this in school-time," said Mr Bentley, somewhat mollified. "I shall send you all to Mr Dalton."

This sobered us at once, and we began to beg Mr Bentley to let us off this time, but his patience was exhausted, and we four, looking very foolish, were obliged to present ourselves before Mr Dalton, in the upper school, with a little note explaining the nature of our crime.

Mr Dalton was the kindest of the masters, but he could be stern when there was occasion for it.

"You know what you have to expect if you don't choose to conduct yourselves properly in school," he said. "There is to be a half-holiday this afternoon, but you will come to school as usual, and I shall find some work for you."

So, when the other fellows were going off to enjoy a splendid sunny afternoon, we four had to betake ourselves to the dusty, stupid schoolroom, and set to work, writing some tiresome lines which Mr Dalton marked out for us. It was very disgusting, but after all, we had nobody to blame but ourselves.

"Now, boys," said Mr Dalton, "I think I can trust you. I wish to go away till five o'clock; will you promise me to stay in the school till then, or must I lock the door?"

"Oh, yes, sir, we'll stay till you come," said Abbing very politely. Abbing was always very polite when he thought it worth his while.

So Mr Dalton went away, and we, by common consent, addressed ourselves to our task with great diligence, so as to get it over as soon as possible. When

we had finished, we found it was still a long time till Mr Dalton's promised return, and naturally cast about for means of amusing ourselves in the best way possible under the circumstances.

Master Abbing's chief idea on the subject of amusement was annoying some one else, so he produced a small squirt, which he filled with ink, and let fly at Phillips, making a sad mess of a beautiful clean collar which that young gentleman had assumed, as he was going to tea in the evening with Mrs Pearson.

"I'll give it you, Abbing," cried Phillips in great wrath, making a dart at him, but Abbing was off like a shot, and led Jemima such a dance over the schoolroom, dodging behind forms and under desks, that at length he gave up the pursuit in despair, and sat down.

"Oh, I'm awfully sorry, Jemima, I didn't mean it," apologised Abbing, from a safe distance, pretending to cry.

Phillips wouldn't answer him at first, and sat in a state of dignified sulks, but when the rest of us began to play leap-frog over the forms, he presently brightened up and joined us, graciously consenting to forgive Abbing this time. Then we grew tired of leap-frog, or perhaps we were afraid of making too great a mess of the school-room, and sat down to yawn and wish it were five o'clock.

"I say," proposed Abbing, "let's go over to the alms-houses, and look up some of the old boys."

"But we promised not to leave the school," said Phillips.

"Well, the alms-houses are part of the school."

"Dalton needn't know that we have been there," said Lessing, putting the matter more honestly, for Lessing didn't deal in equivocations.

"All right. Anything will be better than sticking in this stupid place," assented I; and the end was that we went.

The foundation of the Whitminster Grammar School included alms-houses for six old men and six old women, who from time immemorial had been familiarly known to the scholars as the "old boys" and the "old girls." They inhabited two rows of tumble-down-looking little houses at the other side of our playground, each house consisting of one snug room opening out on the cloisters through which on Sundays and feast-days the choristers walked in procession to the Minster. So in one sense these alms-houses might be said to be part of the school, and we were able to tell our consciences that we were breaking no promise in visiting them, though I dare say we didn't suppose that our consciences would believe us.

Some of these old people were great favourites among the boys; others, I am sorry to say, we were rather fond of teasing. The one we now proposed to visit was a lame old man whom we had nicknamed Julius Cæsar, for what reason I don't know. He had served abroad as a soldier, and was given to telling very

wonderful tales of his adventures—so wonderful that even we didn't believe in them. You couldn't name any part of the world which he didn't declare he had visited, and met there with some most extraordinary peril. The fact was that the poor fellow was rather crazy, and needed very little egging on to talk a great deal of nonsense.

"Well, Julius, how are you to-day?" said Lessing as we popped in at the door of his tiny abode.

"None the better for seeing you," growled Julius.

"Oh, I say! you might be more civil when we have taken the trouble of coming here to pay you a visit."

"I've had better folks than you come to see me," said Julius, catching hold of his crutch, with a look at Abbing as if he was afraid that sly youth was going to run off with it. "The Duke of Wellington is coming to see me some of these days."

"But he's dead, you know, Julius."

"Don't tell me. I was an old man before you was born, lad, and I ought to know better."

"But did you ever know the Duke of Wellington, Julius?"

"Know him! Wasn't he with me when my head was chopped off by them Chinamen?"

"Oh, tell us! How was it, Julius?"

But Julius, after rousing our curiosity, seemed to think that his tale was not to go too cheap, for he shut his eyes and wouldn't say a word for a minute or two.

"Let's go off and see old Charley's birds," proposed

Abbing, and then Julius suddenly condescended to speak, and dashed into his story.

"We was going together a day's march in front of the army when them Jibberaway Indians—"

"Why, you said Chinamen just now!"

"Do you think you or me knows best?" rejoined Julius, indignant at having his credit impeached. "Wasn't I an old man before you was born?"

"All right. Go ahead."

"It was them Jibberaway Indians, I tell ye, that live in the middle of Africa, and they comes up to me and the Duke, and says they to us, says they—

"But did you understand them, Julius? Did they speak English?"

"They spoke better English nor you," said Julius, turning a look of contempt on Abbing, and continuing his story. "Says the Duke to me, says he, 'my lad,' says he, 'I think this is a bad look out for us!'"

"Is that all?" asked Lessing, as the old man came to a stop again.

"No. The best is coming. They dragged us off to prison, and when we had been there for a matter of mayhap two hours, in comes the biggest blackguard of the whole lot, with his face painted red and blue and a sword as big as a ploughshare in his hand. 'Will you give me them cartridges you have in your pouch?' says he. 'You be blowed,' says the Duke, like a man. 'You're another,' says he, and then he calls in three more fellows, each with a big sword and a club. 'Now, see

here,' says he, 'I'm going to cut off them heads of yours, so look out,' says he. Then the Duke took off his cocked hat, and sent it flying at the chap's shins, and then they all ran at us."

Here Julius made another provoking pause. He ought to have been editor of a magazine, for he evidently understood the art of "To be continued in our next."

"Well, what happened then?" asked Phillips, who was getting quite interested in this ridiculous narrative.

But Julius wouldn't go on.

"Have you brought me any 'baccy?" he asked.

"No. You oughtn't to smoke, Julius. Mr Vialls would cane you if he caught you smoking."

Julius grunted.

"Aren't you going to finish your story?"

"Not without you give me three halfpence to buy 'baccy."

"Oh, bother, let's leave him," said Abbing, and we walked off without further ceremony.

Some mischief was always being found for Abbing's idle hands to do. When we got out into the cloister there was a gutter full of rain water, which had dripped from the roof, and Abbing, stooping down, filled his squirt from it.

"Here's a joke," he said, chuckling. "I'll go in and squirt this down the old fool's neck, and then bolt. Won't he be waxy! But he daren't tell, for fear of our telling that he asked us for tobacco."

"Oh, it's a shame," protested Phillips.

"Yes! Good boy, Jemima!" said Abbing, ironically; and stole back into the house to execute his little trick.

But as soon as he was inside, Lessing, grinning from ear to ear, softly pulled the door to, and turned the key; after which he performed a dance of delight on the pavement, while we laughed heartily at the joke.

In a minute we heard Abbing rush to the door, and try in vain to open it. Then Julius' voice in great wrath, and Abbing screaming for help. Peeping in through the dingy, diamond-paned window, we perceived that the old man had got hold of Abbing, and was belabouring him in such a rage, that Lessing thought he had better open the door. Out bounced Abbing, with the crutch flying after him, and Julius came hobbling to the threshold, shaking his fist, bellowing, uttering fearful threats of vengeance, and making such a noise that the occupants of the other almshouses looked out to see what was the matter.

"You mean cads!" blubbered Abbing, addressing us. "I didn't think you would go and play such a trick on a fellow."

But we were silent and horror-stricken, for, lo and behold, there was Mr Dalton standing by! He had been reading to one of the old women, and the noise had brought him out.

"How is this!" he asked, as we stood before him, feeling as if we should like to sink into the ground, and escape his reproachful glance. "Did you not promise me that you would not leave the school till I came."



We could make no reply to this; at least it was only Abbing, who, after a pause, ventured to mumble out something about this being part of the school.

"Abbing!" said Mr Dalton, in a tone of the utmost scorn, and Abbing grew first very red, and then very white, before that quiet piercing eye.

"Go," said Mr Dalton, motioning us towards the schoolroom, and off we went, with our tails very much between our legs.

Mr Dalton stayed one moment to speak to the old man, and then followed us, and we had the pleasure of sitting for about a quarter of an hour, speculating as to what our fate would be, while he walked up and down the school-room, apparently so disgusted and annoyed, that he could not trust himself to speak to us.

"Phillips and Lessing, I thought I could trust *you*," he said, at length, and these two boys seemed to feel ashamed of themselves, while I was rather indignant at his not appearing to think that he could trust me. "You will all stay in for the next two half-holidays. Abbing, go into the Headmaster's room."

Abbing obeyed, weeping, and presently returned, looking very much subdued.





## CHAPTER VII.

### QUARRELLING.

**A**FTER this I grew disgusted with Abbing, and tried to avoid him. I wished to be thought well of both by my masters and my schoolfellows, and he didn't seem to be in high favour with either. But he stuck to me, and seemed determined that we should be friends. At length a regular quarrel came about between us in this manner :

One day we were sitting together in school, writing our exercises, when I became aware that Master Abbing was looking slyly on mine and copying it. My exercises, generally, had fewer mistakes than his, and even if it had not been so, I believe he was lazy enough to do anything to save himself the trouble of thinking and and looking up words in his Dictionary.

"Don't copy, Abbing," whispered I ; Williamson will catch you, and then he'll be pitching into me too."

"I'm not copying," protested Abbing. "I was only looking at one word." But in a minute he whispered

to me, "I say, why do you put Balbus in the nominative. Doesn't he want to be accusative?"

"You *are* copying," was my answer, and I moved away from him as far as I could. I had already found out that Mr Williamson was rather sharp about these tricks.

Thus detected, Abbing was fain to make an attempt at doing his exercise himself. But presently I found him shuffling himself and his books nearer me, and seeing that he was bent upon it, I made no more attempts to prevent him looking over my exercise.

That afternoon Abbing and I were sent for by Mr Williamson, and finding him with our two exercises in his hand, we were not surprised when he said—

"I am sorry to say, Abbing and Smith, that these two exercises are so much alike, that I can't help suspecting one of you has been copying from the other."

"No, sir; I am sure we weren't," began Abbing. "At least, I know, I didn't copy."

I was so astonished at hearing this downright lie, that I started and looked away.

"Did you copy from Abbing, Smith?"

"No, sir," I said; but it was with an air of confusion, which, among boys, is not always a sign of guilt. But Mr Williamson thought it was in this case; he looked suspiciously at me, and spoke sternly—

"Take care, Smith; I am afraid you are not telling me the truth."

I made no answer, but turned red, and glanced

uneasily at Abbing, who only said with the utmost coolness—

“I don’t think he could have copied from me, sir.”

“One of you *must* have copied. I find some of the most ridiculous and improbable mistakes made in each exercise, and I don’t believe that you could both have made them by chance.”

He looked hard at me once more, and I grew more confused under his glance, and said nothing. I certainly looked guilty, while Abbing seemed quite at his ease. Mr Williamson took pity on me, though, in general, he showed no mercy on any boy whom he suspected of deceiving him.

“I can’t help suspecting that one of you has been dishonest. For it is dishonest to copy another boy’s exercise, and show it up as your own. I shall say nothing more just now, but the next time I find this happening, I shall punish severely for it. You may go now.”

I couldn’t help seeing that this caution was particularly intended for me, and I was very much annoyed that he suspected me unjustly. I could not bring myself to speak to him, however, but as soon as we were fairly out of the room, I burst out upon Abbing.

“There now ; I told you that you would get me into a scrape, you fool.”

“Hush ! Don’t speak so loud here, or Paddy will hear us.”

“Well, I wish he would. It would serve you right if he did.”

"Never mind. What's the use of making such a row? It's all right now."

"It isn't all right. He thinks that I copied from you."

"No he doesn't."

"Yes he does ; and you know it was you that copied from me."

"No, I didn't."

"But you did ; you confessed it at the time."

"I only looked at a word or two."

"Oh, I say ! I saw you looking over me ever so many times, and then to go and tell Williamson that you didn't, and get me into a scrape ! You are a sneak, Abbing."

Abbing was disposed to conciliate me, but as by this time we had made up to some of the other boys who were walking home, he didn't like being blackguarded in this way before them.

"I'm no more a sneak than you are," he grunted.

"I wouldn't have gone and told Williamson such a beastly lie."

"Oh yes ! wouldn't you ?" he said in his sneering way, and the cup of my wrath flowed over. I struck him on the face.

"You'd better not do that again," he exclaimed, doubling his fists.

"Hallo ! Here's a fight on between Abbing and Smith," shouted somebody ; and in another moment we were hard at it.

I had not been without experience in the pugilistic art at Mr Brown's academy, and had already had one or two half-serious skirmishes at Whitminster with boys of my own size. But now my blood was fairly up, and Abbing would have got the worst of the encounter. It only lasted a minute, though, for one of the masters appeared coming up the road behind us, and we were obliged to stop and make our way home, each vowing to a train of interested friends that he would presently extinguish the other.

But when Abbing had reflected over the matter, he came to the conclusion that on the whole it was desirable for him to spare me, and backed out of the business, to the great disgust of those who had been looking forward to an exciting spectacle in the lavatory, to enliven the hour before tea. So he slunk into obscurity for the rest of the evening, while I claimed the honours of victory and strutted about quite cock-a-hoop, magnifying the account of our little collision for the benefit of all who would listen.

So elated was I, that I conceived that a fitting time had come for advancing my position in society. Those of my readers who are still boys, or who have not forgotten their boyhood, will understand that there are different ranks in the society of boys as well as of men. For instance, Kennedy Primus was a long way above fellows like Abbing and me, and we should not under ordinary circumstances have presumed to be too intimate with him. I looked up to him with great admiration

and respect, and he had sometimes been pleased to patronise me, and had smiled approvingly when he heard how and for what I had thrashed Abbing. So I must needs improve the occasion by trying to be familiar with him, which I should not have done so readily if I had known more of his character. You never knew exactly what mood he would be in. Sometimes he was so good-natured that you might do anything with him, and then again he would get into a bad humour, and be so touchy, that you could scarcely speak to him.

He was sitting at a table reading, and the best way of making myself agreeable which I could think of was to perch on the other side of the table and begin rolling up little pieces of paper and throwing them at him.

"Who's that?" he said crossly, looking up as one of my pellets hit him on the nose. "I say, Smith, shut up. I'm doing my lessons."

But I was in too cocky a humour to stop. I took two or three more shots at him, and presently succeeded in hitting him on the eye, and rousing his wrath. With an exclamation, he jumped up, vaulted over the table, and made a dash at me. I dodged away, and tried to make off, but my foot slipped, and down I went on the floor.

"Will you do that again!" he said, catching me up, and boxing my ears smartly.

"Don't!" I cried, putting up my hands, and struggling to get away.

"Well, will you meddle with me again?"

"Oh, you bully!" was all I could say, getting angry in my turn.

"Oh, look here! Kangaroo Primus is in a wax!" proclaimed Lessing, and this added to Kennedy's wrath.

"I'm a bully, am I? Well, I'll give you some good reason to call me a bully," and he boxed my ears again. "There, see what you have done!"

In my struggles I had upset a large ink bottle which was on the table. Kennedy now released me, and set himself to wipe up the mess, and while he was doing this I retired to a corner in the sulks, highly disgusted with the result of my attempt to assume the privileges of friendship with my betters.

At this point I must frankly confess that my story is labouring under a difficulty. Writers who profess to give a true narrative of facts have to sacrifice a certain amount of dramatic force. I have all along meant my readers rather to admire Kennedy, because I admired him myself. This being the case, it is necessary that he and I should be reconciled in due form. The proper thing in story books would be for him to come to me, and ask my pardon for being too hasty with me. I am afraid he did not do so; and yet, he did after a manner apologise to me for his fit of crossness. This is what really happened.

When Mr Vialls came in to superintend preparation, he was not long of noticing the mess that had been made by the broken ink bottle, and asked who had done it. Kennedy at once stood up, and so did I.



"I broke it, sir."

"It was my fault," said Kennedy.

"No, sir, it was mine," said I, determined not to be outdone in generosity.

"No, it wasn't, sir."

Mr Vialls looked at us both curiously, and said, as if pleased with our wish to exculpate each other :

"Well, we'll say no more about it this time."

I sat down feeling highly satisfied with myself, and my wrath all evaporated when I saw Kennedy glancing and smiling at me, as if to say—

"You're not a bad fellow, and I am graciously pleased to take you into favour again."

Whereupon I began to hold up my head once more, and to flatter myself that I was a person of some consideration. But I felt that one thing was wanting to my being looked upon with entire esteem by my companions. I ought to be caned. My friendship with Phillips and Abbing had given the other boys an idea that I was a bit of a muff, and it was necessary to get them out of that delusion as soon as possible. I had not long to wait. The fates which rule over the school-boy world had already sent forth the fiat, "Have then thy wish." And as the occasion is deeply engraven on my memory, I shall devote a whole chapter to the account of the circumstances which led to it. This chapter may seem very paltry and uninteresting to grown-up readers ; but such is schoolboy life.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### INFANDUM RENOVARE DOLOREM.

**I**T was a sultry, close afternoon, such as May afternoons are wont to be, and some of us were fidgeting and idling in school as schoolboys are wont to do. We were supposed to be doing sums, but when once we had finished a decent number for the sake of appearances, our view of the matter was that the best thing to be done was to devote ourselves to some quiet and amusing occupation, always providing that we could manage to escape the notice of the masters. When Phillips had the desk next me we used to bend down our heads over our slates and indulge in confidential conversations on various subjects. He was especially fond of telling me long stories about his ancestors, and I used to draw splendid pictures of one of them who, he said, had been a knight, and gone on the crusades, and of another, his great-great (I forget how many greats) grandfather, who commanded a regiment at the battle of Quebec, and was several times nearly scalped by Red

Indians. I have to this day in my old school Euclid a striking scene from the life of this intrepid warrior. In a cocked hat and great boots he is riding a long-tailed charger, and holding the bridle between his teeth; is waving a sword in one hand, and a gun in the other, while around him is dancing a band of ferocious braves, whose countenances alone would be enough to strike terror into the boldest heart. A French officer in a still larger cocked hat, is looking out from behind a tree, and taking aim at Phillips' ancestor with an enormous pistol. The British army is seen advancing in the distance, and to prevent mistakes, an inscription beneath acquaints the beholder that this picture represents "An english officer attackd by saviges."

Abbing, who sat beside us, used to tease Phillips dreadfully, not only by scribbling "Jemima Ann," and "Everardina," over his books, but by openly scoffing at, and reviling his ancestors. He utterly refused to believe in the distinguished warrior who had the honour of being nearly scalped, and drove poor Phillips wild by giving out that his father kept a tripe-shop in Bristol, and that the carriage which our friend Everard talked so much about was a light cart used for conveying pigs' trotters and pork pies through the streets of that city. Poor Phillips' vanity was sorely offended by this sort of chaff, and when our sudden and violent friendship came to as sudden an end, he got Mr Williamson to give him another desk, and Lessing became our neighbour in his place.

Lessing was a very odd boy, but everybody liked him. He was a German by birth, but had lived in England long enough to speak the language almost as correctly as any of us, though with a strong accent, which, whenever he was excited or spoke loud, had rather a ludicrous effect. He was a cool, quiet, good-natured fellow, with a great deal of fun about him, and not by any means without brains, though he was rather lazy. Abbing and he were the two rival jesters of our form, but there was a great difference between their jesting, which I shall leave the attentive reader to find out for himself.

On this particular afternoon, Mr Lessing and I were engaged in an intellectual game at noughts and crosses on our slates, and were consequently neglecting the sum which we ought to have been doing: "If three cart horses can plough a field of thirteen acres in two days, how long would ten horses take to plough fifteen acres?" Having each done two sums already, and not feeling any particular interest in this agricultural question, we were happily oblivious of the existence of Colenso and his arithmetical instrument of torture, when suddenly we were aware of Mr Williamson standing behind us, and regarding our slates with much interest. We started, looked at him, at each other, and then on our desks, and I have no doubt we looked rather sheepish, especially as our heartless neighbours began to grin when they saw how neatly we had been caught.

"Oh, ho!" said Mr Williamson! "Just so! I see.

Will you show me this sum in your book, Smith? You can't. Of course not! Very amusing, I have no doubt, Lessing! but business is business, and pleasure is pleasure, so you two young men will be kind enough to do four of these sums at home, and bring them to me to-morrow morning; and you shall have eight if you don't finish this one you are doing by four o'clock.

We were fairly caught, so the only thing to be done was to put the best face possible on the matter, and make haste to finish the sum we should have been doing. We both did it before four o'clock, and just then something happened which soon made us forget our disgust at having an imposition.

About five minutes to four a man in livery entered the schoolroom, whose appearance caused a sudden commotion. The boys grinned, and laughed, and nodded to each other.

"Hurrah! It's the mayor's servant," said George Kennedy, in a loud whisper, regardless of Mr Williamson's sharp ears. "We're going to have a holiday."

The mayor's servant, making an attempt to look dignified, as became the importance of his mission, walked up to Mr Dalton's desk, and said:

"The Mayor sends his compliments, sir, and thinks to-morrow will be a fine day."

"Very well. Give my compliments to the Mayor, and say that I shall be happy to tell Dr Pearson," replied Mr Dalton; and the mayor's servant retired, smiling

graciously around him, as if conscious that the boys looked upon him as their benefactor.

We listened with delight to every word of this conversation, which for us, if not for the uninstructed reader, had a most satisfactory meaning. It was customary for the Mayor of Whitminster to ask for a holiday now and then, and, from the remotest ages, his request to the Headmaster had taken this form of a hint about the weather. Such a request was always attended to; indeed, an opinion was prevalent among us that something vaguely dreadful would happen to the master who dared to refuse it. And thus we grew up with the greatest respect and affection for the municipal institutions of Whitminster. We once had a son of the then mayor at the Grammar School. How we did persecute that poor boy! Not content with nicknaming him "Foal" (because he was the son of a *mare*!), we teased him morning, noon, and night, to induce his father to exert his authority, and wring holidays out of the masters. The boy was by no means loath to comply with our wishes; but between us we rather overdid it; for at length the worthy magistrate, his father, who was a tailor in private life, grew weary of our continued solicitations, and gave him to understand that if the Grammar School boys didn't stop asking for holidays, they should never have another one while he was in office. We unanimously voted this conduct to be quite unworthy of the chief magistrate of Whitminster.

"Oh, yes! Don't you be too sure about it," said Mr

Williamson, in his droll way, as we were shoving away our books and banging down the lids of our desks in a great state of excitement. At all events you must all be careful to learn your lessons to-night, just as if no such misfortune as a holiday were likely to happen to-morrow. Perhaps it may be a bad day after all. Days are but days, and mayors but men. There be rain-clouds and thunder-clouds ; and do you know, I believe the barometer is going down this afternoon."

"Oh no, sir! You are only trying to tease us," cried Harry Kennedy.

"Well, see that you learn your lessons to-night as usual. It is as well to be on the safe side, isn't it, Kangaroo?"

"Oh, I shall, sir," said the Kangaroo laughing. "I like to have them over, and then there will be nothing to do to-morrow evening."

This is what I, and I dare say most of us intended to do. But schoolboys are the most improvident of creatures, and are always trying to put off from to-day anything which may be done to-morrow. The weather seemed so fine and settled, that we made no doubt of having our holiday ; and I, for one, scarcely tried to prepare my lessons, and didn't do a bit of my imposition for Mr Williamson, trusting that he would not ask for it. I was in a great state of excitement. On whole holidays we were allowed to go expeditions into the country, and I had been asked to join a bird-nesting party. We were going to a wood some miles distant,

and Phillips, who was rather a favourite with Mrs Pearson, had got her to promise to let us have some provisions, so that we might stay out all day and have a small pic-nic. This was evidently a fit occasion for throwing off all stupid thoughts of Cæsar and Greek grammar ; so that evening many of us gave ourselves up to joyful anticipation, and lay awake half the night relating wonderful adventures and escapes of bird-nesting expeditions.

Next morning dawned bright and clear—too bright, more experienced observers would have said ; but we were not weather-wise and made up our minds that our holiday was safe. So, again, our preparation of lessons was, in my case at least, only a half-hour of restlessness, and we burst out for a run before breakfast in the greatest glee.

But alas ! human affairs are uncertain, as the example of one of our syntax rules so truly but so unheededly reminded us. The sky was no longer blue, and a gathering cloud was creeping up from the west. In like manner did gloomy forebodings gather in our careless breasts. We began to fear, though still we hoped and tried to believe that it would not rain. But it did rain ! The cloud burst while we were sitting at breakfast, and it proved to be no passing shower, but a steady, downright, drenching pour of rain, which seemed likely to last the whole day. So we mournfully put on our great-coats and went on our way to school, where we walked sorrowfully up and down the cloisters, in vain trying to



comfort each other till that disgusting bell summoned us into school.

The rain was coming down faster than ever, and all hope of the holiday was gone, for this day at least. So after prayers, we set about our usual work in a very unwilling frame of mind. You should have seen how glum some of our form looked as we assembled in our class-room down stairs to wait for Mr Williamson's appearance. It wasn't only the disappointment, but we were conscious of knowing very little about our lessons; and Mr Williamson was not likely to make allowance for our imprudence. The wisest of the defaulters betook themselves into corners of the room, and got a better instructed friend to give them some idea of their construing. Abbing and I had been so idle that we saw this would be of no use, and devoted these few minutes to wondering what sort of humour our master would be in.

"We *shall* catch it, if Paddy's in a wax to-day," was Abbing's opinion. "He told us to be sure to learn our lessons last night, in case it should be wet to-day."

"What fools we were not to do it! But I'm sure nobody would ever have thought it was going to rain."

"I am glad I put a lot of pomade on my head this morning," remarked Abbing, running his fingers through his hair, and wiping them on his trousers.

This requires explanation. Mr Williamson had, be it known, a trick of rapping you on the head with his knuckles when he was displeased with you, and certain

cunning boys among us had observed that, if you took the trouble to anoint your hair copiously, you escaped all danger of this infliction.

There was one boy in our form whose good nature nothing could disturb—that was Lessing. Abbing was one minute in the highest spirits, and another in the most doleful dumps ; but Lessing was always full of fun and jokes. On the present occasion, instead of giving himself up to lamentation, he had mounted into the master's desk, and was imitating Mr Williamson's voice and gestures in a way which we could not help laughing at. Lessing was a capital mimic ; and did you ever hear a German imitating an Irishman's accent ?

"Come along, boys," he cried, thumping on the desk. "You must take your seats quicker another time, or you and I shall have a quarrel. Attention ! Listen to me. Will you begin to construe, Kangaroo Primus ? Look sharp, sir. Which word must be taken first. Disgusting ! Do you mean to say you have learned this lesson ? Now, take care ; take care. I am not a bit angry, not a bit angry ; but if you don't—— Silence there, you babies in the corner. Go on, Kennedy, my boy, if you don't want to be caned."

"Thank you, Lessing, I'll take my desk," said Mr Williamson, who entered the room just then without being noticed.

Lessing fled in confusion, and we broke into a titter. Pretending not to understand what Lessing had been doing, Mr Williamson walked up to his desk without

another word, though we thought he seemed trying to restrain a smile. We voted him a brick for not being angry with Lessing, and augured favourably of his temper.

The way in which the work of our form was done that morning was enough to put anybody out of temper; and Mr Williamson, though good-natured enough generally, and rather easy about matters of discipline, became a perfect Turk when we couldn't say our lessons. He began with a few pleasant jokes by way of consoling us for our disappointment; but when Kennedy Primus was put on to construe, and broke down entirely, Mr Williamson stopped joking.

"I'm afraid this is the old story," he said. "We expect a holiday, and don't learn our lessons, though we are told to be particularly careful about them, and not to trust to good luck. Well, Mr Kennedy, what have you to say for yourself. H'm! Nothing, I suppose. I'll see about you presently. Lessing, will you go on?"

Lessing got up in his cool, odd way, and began reading with the greatest confidence, but soon showed that he knew no more about the lesson than Kennedy. Mr Williamson's good humour was visibly clouding over, and the rest of us sat as quiet as mice, not venturing to look off our books for fear of drawing the master's attention. Do you remember, reader, the miserable state of suspense in which you used to be, when you didn't know your lesson, and your master was waxing wroth, and you momentarily expected to be called up?

"Sit down—sit down—sit down!" cried Mr Williamson, signing with his hand to Lessing, and looking about for a fresh victim.

And at that moment, it chanced that the unlucky Harry Kennedy leaned over to give Lessing a friendly poke in the ribs, and, overbalancing himself, rolled over on the floor.

"What are you about, Kennedy?" shouted Mr Williamson. "If you haven't learned your lessons, you might have the grace not to play the fool. Go on, and let us see if you have any right to be inattentive; and just let me catch any one else playing these tricks! Come along!"

The poor Kangaroo had tried to learn his lesson, which was more than most of us could say; but he was so confused by his tumble, and Mr Williamson's sharp rebuke, that he too came to grief. Indeed, before he had picked up his book, and found the place, the master's patience was exhausted, and when Harry had stammered out two or three words, he sent him down to the foot of the form, and put on another boy.

"Yes! Just so! Please remember my advice next time, Kennedy. If you don't know your lessons, be very careful how you call attention to yourself by playing the fool."

By ill luck he went on picking out the very boys who had not learned a word of their lessons, and his wrath rose higher and higher.

"I'm not angry—not a bit angry," he exclaimed, "but

this is disgusting. It's no good for me to get angry about it, but you would drive any one wild by your ignorance and carelessness. Go ON, sir, or sit down and hold your tongue if you *are* an utter idiot !”

When Mr Williamson began to tell us that he was not angry, we knew that things had come to a very bad pass indeed, and trembled for the consequences. And when Abbing was put on, and made even a worse mess of it than any one else, our master's indignation boiled over.

“An abominable and disgusting exhibition,” he cried, banging down his book. “I would rather be a coal porter than teach a lot of careless, idle blockheads like you. But I will not put up with it. The whole form will stop in all detention time on Saturday, and I have a good mind to speak to Dr Pearson about keeping this holiday from you when it is given to the rest of the school. I'm not angry, but I will NOT have this sort of thing ; and you must understand that once and for all !”

Thus he spoke in majestic ire, while we sat silent and downcast. In half-an-hour afterwards he would reproach himself for this outburst of temper ; but we took it all as part of the natural order of things. Jupiter was thundering ; we bent our heads before his flashing bolts, and waited till the sky should grow clear. We looked upon him with awe, not with hate. Boys are indulgent to such failings in their rulers ; it is only a cross, grumbling, worrying master that they cannot put up with.

The storm presently passed away, as such storms

generally did. The top boys of the form were now put on, and proved to be better prepared than the former performers. Mr Williamson's frown relaxed, and when the Cæsar lesson was finished, he was pleased to show his clemency and commute our punishment.

"I shan't keep you all in perhaps ; that would be too hard on you, and after all, I suppose there is some allowance to be made for your minds being unsettled by the prospect of this holiday. But you will take care to know this lesson to-morrow, and all of you, except the five top boys, will write it out in Latin and English. By-the-bye, I have to get an imposition from two boys. Who were they ?"

Lessing and I, who had been looking forward to this inquiry with no very comfortable feelings, stood up, and with shame and confusion of face, had to confess that our imposition was not forthcoming.

"Oh!" said Mr Williamson, "did you forget to do them?"

Lessing looked at me and then at the floor ; and then—for he could never resist making a joke—"I didn't forget, sir ; I thought you would forget."

"Oh! You thought the holiday would act as a sort of wet sponge, and blot the matter out of my mind. Rather too wet for that, eh? Lessing, as you are fond of being funny! And did you trust to my forgetting, Smith?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, while I remember, I think I must cane you

both. Come here." And we advanced to his desk, from which he produced a very vicious-looking cane—a much more formidable instrument than Mr Brown's, I perceived.

"I must cane you two boys," said Mr Williamson ; "but I like you all the better for speaking the truth frankly as you did just now, and not trying to make me believe that you had forgotten. It is not a nice thing to be caned, but it's a much worse thing to be a liar. Stand round, Lessing."

"Please, sir, I would rather pay the fine," said Lessing, fumbling in his pocket with great gravity.

The founder of Whitminster Grammar School had ordained in its rules—"That any child unwilling to submit to due correction of the master or ushers, should pay sixpence," and hence it had always been understood that a culprit led forth for execution might choose the alternative of a pecuniary fine. Whether this permission was ever taken advantage of in the olden times, when floggings were more severe, and sixpences more valuable, I know not ; but in our day the boy would have been laughed at who funk'd a thrashing, though the custom was sometimes appealed to for the sake of saving elder boys' dignity. So Lessing's proposal caused some astonishment.

"Oh, come now !" said Mr Williamson, feeling pretty sure that Lessing only intended to raise a laugh. "Well, where is your sixpence, and I will hand it over to the Chancellor of the Exchequer towards paying off the National Debt ?"

Lessing, with a quiet twinkle in his eye, produced some coppers.

"I have only twopence halfpenny just now, sir, but I can give you threepence more on Saturday, and the other halfpenny on the Saturday afterwards."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mr Williamson, not quite sure whether to laugh or be angry, as a roar of laughter greeted this offer. "Stand round at once."

Putting the coppers back into his pocket, Lessing turned his face from the master's desk, and without flinching, received four smart strokes across his shoulders, each of which, to the great amusement of the spectators, raised a cloud of dust from his tweed jacket. I smiled feebly, but I did not feel in the humour to be amused, for it was my turn now. I took my place, bit my lips, and commended myself to the goddess of schoolboy fortitude. The cane came whizzing down, and——

Well, it wasn't half so bad as I expected, not altogether agreeable, but nothing to make a fuss about. I stood quite still till I had got my four cuts, and then strutted back to my seat feeling quite pleased with myself. I looked with friendly pity on Lessing, who was making comic grimaces, with the tears standing in his eyes, and I regarded the rest of the form with pride and satisfaction, hoping that they would observe and admire my coolness. I had at length got the chance of proving myself no chicken.

But I was taken down a peg, as we used to say, as soon as we got out into the playground. By way of



fishing for a compliment on my fortitude, I must needs remark to big Kennedy—"I say, that's a whopping cane of Williamson's."

"Oh yes," said Kennedy, patronisingly. "But you haven't really felt it yet. He always lets a fellow off easily the first time. Just you try it on again, and see if you don't jump."

Which speech, as may be imagined, was a very considerable damper to my self-satisfaction. I felt it quite an insult and an injury that I had not been caned more severely, that I had been treated like a frightened muff newly come to school, and resolved to take an early opportunity of having the mistake set right. This resolution did not fail of being carried out in due time by circumstances over which I had no control.

As I was returning from school that day, Mr Williamson overtook me, and catching hold of me by the ear, began in his off-hand way—

"I say, Smith, I want to speak to you. I was glad to see to-day that Lessing and you did not try to deceive me about that imposition, as you might very easily have done. Always tell the truth, at whatever risk. What a coward the fellow is who would tell a lie, because he is afraid of the cane! But look here, my boy, do you think it was *quite* honourable of you to neglect your imposition, and trust that the holiday would make me forget it? You know, I trust to your own honour in these matters more than to my memory; and don't you think you have not been altogether

straightforward. At least, I shouldn't do so again, if I were you."

"I won't sir," said I, looking up into his face.

"That's right. Then we shan't have any more caning," said Mr Williamson, walking off and leaving me to pursue my way to the cricket-field, and think that he was a jolly fellow, whose good opinion was worth having.





## CHAPTER IX.

### FIGHTING.

**R**EADER, did you ever wear a mortar-board—I mean, a college cap, irreverently so called? If so, you will doubtless remember that you felt at least a couple of inches taller when you first put it on. I know I did. No emperor ever assumed the crown of the Cæsars with more pride and delight. But distinctions are perilous; the exalted are ever subject to the scorn and ridicule of the vulgar. I soon found out that this form of head-dress had its inconveniences, and in particular rendered its wearer liable to the unfriendly and jocular remarks of the other Whitminster boys.

We were rather in the way of looking down upon these other boys, whose ill fortune it was not to be at the Grammar School, and they, for their part, were given to reviling and jeering at us and our caps, whence arose innumerable quarrels and combats. We came in time to listen with lofty disdain to such coarse inquiries as “Who’s yer hatter?” and “How much for the mortar-

board?" but sometimes the public antipathy to the sign of our superiority took a more unpleasant form, and in the snow-balling time, I can tell you, it was no joke.

There was an especial jealousy between us and the pupils of a private school near ours kept by a gentleman of the name of Penny. It will easily be seen that we called his boys by the nickname of "Coppers," and I remember that it was considered an exquisite joke among the younger of us to tell one of them that he was not even a whole penny but only—well, perhaps this piece of wit may be allowed to be forgotten.

Of all the "Coppers," the most obnoxious to myself and my companions was a stout boy who rejoiced in unusually fat cheeks and small eyes, and other peculiarities of manner and appearance which had caused him to be dubbed "Grunter." He was the son of a baker, and, for that reason, I suppose, was also known among his friends by the name of "meal-bag;" but by us the former appellation was considered more appropriate. Not that we often dared to call him so to his face, for the Grunter was a man of war, and the reputation of his prowess was not unknown to us.

Now it chanced that as one day two or three of us were lounging in the Grammar School play-ground, the Grunter hove in sight, and came rolling, in his slow unwieldy way, over the Minster Green, eating a bun as he went.

"Let's chaff him," said Abbing, who was always first to *propose* any piece of mischief.

Whereupon, I, mindful of the railings that were between myself and the Grunter's vengeance, became possessed with a spirit of boldness, and called out:

"Hallo, Grunter! You shouldn't eat all that bun. You'll get too fat."

"He's going in for the prize at a cattle show," remarked another wit.

The Grunter took no other notice of this jocularity than by turning towards us and steadfastly regarding us with his mouth full.

"See if you can't cram a little more in," said I. "What a fat pig you are!"

The Grunter cast a glance at the gate of the Grammar School and another at us. Upon the whole he thought the odds were against him, so he only looked hard at me, and said:

"You'll get something you won't like, some day."

After delivering himself of this oracular prediction, he took another bite out of his bun and moved off. And when I came to think of it, I wasn't quite sure that I had done a wise thing. I was constantly meeting him in the streets, and if he knew me by sight as well as I knew him, the chances were that I might be sorry for having "called" him, as the Whitminster boys used to say. Unpleasant fears of the results of our interview haunted me all that morning, and when we were let out of school, I was rushing off to go home in company with the rest of the boarders, not feeling it quite safe to walk alone. But Mr Vialls called me back.

"Wait a few minutes, Smith," he said. "I wish you to take home the keys."

I was not particularly pleased by having this duty laid upon me, and still less so, when, on looking out of a window I beheld the offended Grunter lounging on the Minster Green, and evidently watching our boys as they went home.

I was in for it now! What could I do? I leave you to imagine the uncomfortable feelings with which I waited till Mr Vials had locked up his desk and collected some books which he was going to take with him. He little knew how disgusted I was at the deliberation with which he did this. If he would only be quick, I thought I might be able to make up to the rear guard of my allies, but every minute took away this chance of escape, and left me more certainly a prey to the savage Grunter, who was still, I saw, on the Minster Green, lounging against a lamp post, and actually eating another bun! Greedy monster!

At length Mr Vials was ready. He locked the doors, and gave me the keys, and we went out on the road. I saw at once that I had not been mistaken. The Grunter was waiting for me, and as soon as he saw us, he put his bun in his pocket, and came towards me with an air that seemed to mean business.

Mr Vials appeared unusually good-natured that day, and I was glad of it. I did not like to tell him of the danger I was in, but I stuck close to him, knowing that my enemy would not attack me in his presence. We

walked down the street chatting together, but every now and then I looked over my shoulder, and saw the implacable Grunter following at a little distance.

Presently we came to the street leading to the railway station. Here Mr Vialls turned off, telling me that he was going out of town that afternoon, and that I must take home the keys.

So now I was left exposed to my enemy, who had come up close behind while Mr Vialls had detained me.

I walked briskly off, but the Grunter stepped out, and was gaining on me every minute. I was ashamed to run ; but not to put too fine a point on it, I was in a great fright. It is one thing to be bold in a regular fight when your blood is up, and another thing to be expecting to be set upon by a boy bigger and stronger than yourself. I would have given a good deal to have held my unlucky tongue, and treated the Grunter with silent contempt, if not with respect.

The Grunter steadily followed me, making no attempt at attack, for a good part of my way home, till at length we reached an unfrequented corner which seemed to him a suitable spot for carrying out his views.

"Hallo ! you there !" he said. "Stop ! I want to speak to you."

Anything was better than being kept in suspense, so I turned round, and faced the foe with as much boldness as I could muster. "What do you want ?"

"I want to punch your head," said the Grunter, in a matter-of-fact tone ; and then, walking up to me, he

knocked off my cap to show that he was not joking. He doubled his fists, and I retreated nearer and nearer to the wall, expecting every moment to be struck. I put the keys in my breast pocket, and prepared for the worst. But he did not seem to be in any hurry, and rather inclined to play with me as a cat does with a mouse.

"So you call 'Grunter' at me, do you? You won't do that again. Take that!" and he gave me a slap on the face as a preliminary to further operations.

But, just as in the fabled combat of old the warrior about to be vanquished was saved by the intervention of some friendly goddess, even so, in my hour of need, timely succour appeared for me in the person of a rather stout and elderly lady, who came running towards us, brandishing her parasol, and pouring forth such burning words of indignation and command—

"Leave that boy alone! Leave that boy alone! Leave him alone, you great, big, hulking bully. How dare you touch him! I'll call for the police if you strike him again. Leave him alone, I say."

It was Mrs Chesman, a lady well known to the Grammar School boys.

"Leave him alone," she kept crying, coming up to us all out of breath. "I won't allow this bullying to go on," and she made furious dabs at the Grunter with her parasol. "I'll tell your father this very afternoon. I'll give you to the policeman! You ought to be ashamed of yourself for striking a smaller boy. If I were a man,



I would give you a good thrashing myself. Get along with you! Get along with you!"

The Grunter was fairly discomfited by this sudden attack, and lost no time in taking to flight, goaded on for some yards by vigorous pokes from Mrs Chesman's parasol. Then the good lady turned, and was coming back to console with me ; but I was so much ashamed of being discovered in this predicament that, as soon as I found myself free, I took the opportunity of making a hasty retreat, without even waiting to thank her for delivering me from the tender mercies of the Grunter.

Mrs Chesman was a very worthy, but a very odd old lady. She was the widow of a former master of the Grammar School, and had never ceased to take a warm interest in us, and indeed in all the boys of Whitminster. For years she had lived in a little house near the school, from the windows of which she was constantly watching us, and keeping a sharp eye over our conduct. If she saw boys fighting or bullying, up would go the window, out would come her head, and she would deliver an animated lecture against violence and cruelty. If this had no effect, she thought nothing of sallying forth into the street and assailing the disturbers of the peace with entreaties, threats, commands, and even blows. Her intentions were excellent, but sometimes her zeal was out of place. Boys have a way of knocking each other about without meaning or doing any harm, and the good lady often interfered with what she took to be a desperate fight, but which was only a friendly skirmish.

She once saw Lessing and me pulling Harry Kennedy by the arms in pure fun, and went straight off to Mr Dalton, and lodged an information against us for gross bullying. So we were rather inclined to laugh at the old lady, though she was so kind-hearted and so fond of us that we could not be rude to her. The street boys were not so particular. It was said that some of them used to get up fights before her door, and refuse to stop at her bidding unless she gave them a penny, which she would do if all other means of restoring order failed.

When I got home and narrated my adventure, I found that my conduct was not altogether approved of.

"Why didn't you turn and have it out with him?" said that cocky little Wood, with an air which seemed to announce that nothing would please him better than playing David to the Grunter's Goliath.

"Oh, ho! Where are all your fine stories about fighting with cads at your old school?" sneered Abbing—just like him.

"You should have fought him," said another. "I don't believe he is half so strong as they say, and it would be a blessing if he had the cheek taken out of him."

"I'd like to see him meddling with me," declared George Kennedy, and he meant it.

So now that the chance was gone, I felt disgusted at not having proved my valour. Even if I had been defeated, a combat with the champion of the "Coppers" would have crowned me with glory. Somehow or other,

it seems much easier to make up one's mind to brave deeds when one is not called on to perform them.

But that very afternoon, the opportunity occurred, and I rose to the occasion. As I was going home from the cricket-field with some half-dozen of our boys, we came face to face with a body of the "Coppers," and in the midst of them the Grunter. They were evidently waiting for our appearance, and as soon as we met, the Grunter accosted me in a business-like manner.

"I say, will you fight me, or be kicked?"

There was no time to hesitate. Here was a chance of distinguishing myself, and I could but get a thrashing, which I seemed likely to come in for anyhow. I might at least die in arms. So I plucked up courage, and accepted the challenge, to the great delight of my companions, who, like me, had everything to gain, and, unlike me, had nothing to lose by the encounter.

"All right. I'll fight."

There was no delay. We repaired to a quiet lane at hand, stripped off our jackets, and went at it.

I suppose I am expected to give a vivid account of this combat. I might do so by drawing somewhat on my imagination; but if I am to speak the truth, all I can remember at this distance of time is that in about two minutes I was most fully and satisfactorily persuaded of the Grunter's superiority in feats of arms, and was by no means sure as to whether I had not been deprived of the services of one eye and two teeth. I still stood up to him, though, feeling equally afraid to

give up or to go on. But the Grunter proved a not ungenerous enemy; he fought for victory, not for vengeance, and his wounded honour was satisfied.

He rushed in on me, got my head beneath his arm, and held me tight in spite of my struggles, but did not strike me.

“Will you give in?” he said.

“I’ll stop,” I replied, with an effort, and my enemy released me, and retired modestly among the ranks of his admiring friends.

I put on my jacket, and we slipped off without delay, feeling humbled in the presence of our triumphant rivals the Coppers. As soon as we got home I examined my wounds, and found that there was not much harm done, except a cut lip and an eye that promised in the course of time to become of a beautiful black and yellow hue. How to conceal these injuries was the next question, for Mr Vialls was severe about such affrays, and fights with boys of other schools were especially prohibited. I was recommended to bathe my eye in warm water, and—luckily it was Saturday—a subscription was entered into among the boys who had not yet spent all their pocket-money to buy a piece of raw beef-steak, which was promptly applied to the injury. But these precautions were not of much use, and I began to look forward with unpleasant feelings to meeting Mr Vialls at tea, so I was glad to hear that he was to be away till Monday and that Mr Williamson was coming to look after us for that evening. Mr Williamson was understood to be not

unfriendly to a bit of a fight now and then. And indeed, when he saw me at tea, he put on a very grave face and said—

“Smith, my boy, I suppose you have been bending so closely over your dictionary that you have hurt your eye with the corner of it. You shouldn’t be so studious. You’ll be having brain fever next.”

This joke was, of course, received with great laughter, and my mind was set at ease.

So long as there was no danger of being punished, I was disposed to be satisfied with my exploit. There was no disgrace in being beaten by a bigger and stronger boy, and the spectators of the combat did full justice to my valour. On the whole, the house was favourably impressed with my conduct, and I became greatly elated, and desirous of another opportunity of proving myself a doughty warrior.

In about a week this new opportunity came. Abbing and I had a paltry squabble in the lavatory one evening about something or other, in the course of which I told him he was a cad.

“No more a cad than you.”

“Yes, you are. Your father is a grocer. You told me so, yourself,” said I, too angry to consider that Abbing had described his parent by the more genteel appellation of a tea merchant.

“And yours is a churchwarden,” retorted he, at which there was a great laugh.

When I first came to Whitminster I had innocently

boasted to Phillips that my father held that office. Being conscious now that I had made a fool of myself, I was rather sore on the subject ; and the words were scarcely out of Abbing's mouth before I sprang at him, and struck him. Abbing returned the blow, for he too had lost his temper, and we had it out on the spot. We were too angry to do each other much harm, and the fight very soon came to an end, with the result of my having decidedly the best of it.

This time I was not so successful, however, in escaping the notice of Mr Vialls. As soon as he came in to preparation, he looked at my red face, and for the first time noticed my eye, from which the traces of the former fight had not yet disappeared.

"Have you been fighting, Smith?"

"Yes, sir."

"With whom?"

"I would rather not say, sir."

But at that moment Abbing entered the room from the lavatory ; and his face, from which he had vainly been trying to wipe away the marks of the combat, answered Mr Vialls' question.

"Oh, I see!" he said. "You two boys must go to Dr Pearson. He has desired me to send to him all boys who may be caught fighting."

So off we had to go with a note from Mr Vialls to the awful presence of the head-master, whom we scarcely ever saw, and who seldom interfered with the discipline of the school, unless in very bad cases. If it

had not been that the excitement of the fight was not quite worn off, we should have felt terribly afraid. As it was, we entered Dr Pearson's private staircase with dismay, and what courage we had oozed out every minute as we stood in the lobby, and having given our note to a servant to be taken to Dr Pearson, waited for some minutes, at the end of which Mrs Pearson appeared.

"Dr Pearson is not well enough to see you," she said. "Now, what is this you two have been doing? What silly little boys you are!"

Abbing and I modestly hung our heads.

"Was it a got-up-fight, or a quarrel, Smith?"

"It wasn't a got-up fight. It was my fault," said I, supposing that Abbing would try to back out of the scrape, and wishing to appear magnanimous.

But I had judged Abbing unjustly, for he made haste to say—

"No; it was mine just as much."

"Well, why can't you live peaceably and quietly without squabbling—about nothing, I dare say. Now, are you friends again?"

We looked at each other, and grinned faintly.

"Well, go away, and don't be so foolish again, or I shall have you punished."

With this the good lady patted Abbing on the head, and retired; and we followed her example, feeling glad to have got off so easily and much more amiably disposed towards each other. At the same time, I was not

quite sure whether we ought not to feel insulted, because Mrs Pearson seemed to look upon our encounter with something like contempt, and to treat us rather like naughty children than ferocious fire-eaters.

I am afraid I must apologise for the trifling and undramatic nature of my pugilistic experiences, as set forth in this chapter. I know very well what is the proper thing for the hero of a tale of schoolboy life to do. He must have a quarrel with another boy ever so much bigger than himself. The fight must last for half-an-hour or thereabouts. The big boy must get the best of it at first, but the smaller one is to come up undaunted again and again, and finally to make a tremendous effort and beat his opponent, just as every one expects him to give in. Such tales are exciting; but I have none such to tell, and my reader must take what he gets, and be thankful or not as he pleases. We seldom had got-up fights at Whitminster, unless in pure fun, and if ever there was a quarrel among the younger boys, it was generally settled in a very short time, without much regard to dramatic effect.







## CHAPTER X.

TICK.



THINK the reader of this truthful story knows already that I had conceived a great admiration for George and Harry Kennedy, and was anxious to be among their friends ; but for some time I did not seem to get on with them. I suppose they thought me too fussy and conceited ; at any rate, the friendship was all on one side, and sometimes I got snubbed for my pains when I tried to be familiar. Not by Harry Kennedy. He was always kindly and pleasant to every one ; but George, his elder brother, gave me to understand more than once that he rather looked down upon me.

I was very much annoyed with him about the time of my fight with Abbing. He was captain of our second eleven, and there happened to be a vacancy in it, which I thought I ought to fill. Kennedy thought otherwise, and his brother was chosen. This seemed to me very unfair, for I considered myself a better player than the

Kangaroo ; but no one except Abbing was of my opinion, and he was always ready to say something against the Kennedys.

"Oh, yes! Of course, Kennedy has his own brother rather than you," he said.

My fight with Abbing had disposed me to be more friendly towards him, and now I began to think that after all, he wasn't such a bad fellow. At all events, he hadn't committed the great offence of the other boys in liking the Kangaroo better than me, and thinking him a better cricketer.

"I shouldn't go near that humbugging cricket any more than I could help," he informed me. "I'd have nothing to do with those Kennedys. Cut it altogether to-day, and come out with me."

We were obliged to go to cricket one whole afternoon in the week. On our half-holiday, we were allowed to do as we pleased, and fellows like Abbing spent it in lounging about, doing nothing, or reading novels. I had been hitherto a zealous adherent of the cricket-field, and had rather looked down on the "shirks," as we called them. But I was so disappointed and disgusted at not being taken into the second eleven, that I listened to Abbing's advice, and for a short time we became great allies again.

"Let's go down to Matthews, and have some grub," he said.

"But I haven't any tin."

"Never mind. We'll manage," said Abbing, and sup-

posing that, in an unusual fit of generosity, he was going to treat me, I consented to go with him to Matthews the confectioner's shop, which has already been mentioned. It was a favourite resort of ours, though we were forbidden to go into that part of the town except on one day in the week.

But on the way I discovered that Master Abbing was no richer than myself, and that he proposed to "go tick."

"Mrs Matthews will let you have a tick there. She always lets our fellows ; but she won't give the Coppers anything without paying for it. That's what it is to wear a mortar board, my boy ! We are the young gentlemen of the Grammar School, you know, and they are only Mr Penny's boys."

I wished I hadn't come with Abbing, now. I didn't feel at all comfortable about the idea of getting into debt, which I knew my father would very much dislike me to do. But I did not care to say so to Abbing. I wasn't afraid to fight him, but I was afraid of his thinking me honest and dutiful. Such cowards we are.

The temptation was great. I was not such a greedy fellow as my companion, but I was as fond of sweet things as most boys ; and on a hot afternoon, when you have nothing particular to do, a confectioner's shop does seem a sort of paradise. So I allowed Abbing to ask Mrs Matthews to let me "go tick," and then we had some tarts and a bottle of gingerbeer each. But I was careful not to go beyond sixpence, fully intending to pay off the debt next Saturday, when I got my pocket-

money. Still, I could not help feeling annoyed about it all afternoon. The tarts were eaten, and I should have no pocket-money to buy anything on Saturday; but this I should not have minded so much, if I had not felt that I had done wrong, because I was afraid to say "no!"

I soon found out what are the inconveniences of spending your money before you have got it. On Saturday morning, as we were larking about in our dormitory, we managed to break a basin-stand, and Mr Vialls stopped our pocket-money to pay for the damage. So now I could not carry out my resolution of paying Mrs Matthews, and felt more uncomfortable than ever.

"Never mind," said Abbing. "Why should you pay her to-day? Why should you pay her at all till you come back next half? You'll have lots of money then, and you won't want it all. I always run up a good long tick in the summer half. I think grub tastes much nicer in the summer."

There was something in this, I thought. Then, what was the harm of getting into debt if you knew that you could pay? and I should very likely have more money than I wanted when I came back after the holidays. That afternoon I went to Matthews' with some other boys, and as they were all buying something, I had some more sweets, and increased my debt. And as I was coming home from the cricket field, I thought how nice it would be to have some toffee to eat on Sunday. Abbing agreed with me, and we slipped round to Matthews', and had sixpence worth each.

Mrs Matthews was very civil and pleasant, and didn't seem to mind waiting for her money. After all, it was the same thing to her, and it was very pleasant for us to be able to get what we wished, whether we had money or not. I soon ceased to feel uncomfortable at the idea of being in debt. I would only go the length of a shilling a-week, I resolved; there were four weeks to the holidays, and that would just make four shillings. But the first week I persuaded myself that I might spend two shillings, and then I wouldn't go to Matthews' during the week of the examinations. Then I settled that I need not make any rules of this kind at all. I could easily spare more than four shillings after the holidays; and in the meantime I might enjoy myself, and make the other fellows think me a nice fellow by treating them at Matthews'. So, bit by bit, my scruples disappeared, till I was in debt far more than I cared to think about. The next thing was to discover that the best way was not to think about it at all. A convenient way of getting over difficulties—for a time.

One hot afternoon Abbing and I had betaken ourselves to Matthews', and after regaling on macaroons and strawberry puffs, proposed to indulge in a draught of what we used to call "Matthews' champagne," a mixture of raspberry vinegar and lemonade, which we thought a beverage fit for the gods. Mrs Matthews smilingly mixed these enticing liquids in a large glass cup, and gave it to me. I took a long pull, and was handing it to Abbing, when between us we managed

to let it slip. It fell on the floor, and was smashed in pieces.

"Dear! dear!" exclaimed Mrs Matthews, "what have you done! that glass cost me six shillings."

"What a clumsy fellow you are, Bob," said Abbing.

"Me! that's good! As if it wasn't your fault as much as mine. Why didn't you catch hold?"

"As if you didn't let it go before I could!"

"Anyhow, one of you must pay me for it," said Mrs Matthews. "I can't afford to lose six shillings, and of course young gentlemen always pay for what they break."

"It isn't me that has to pay," protested Abbing. "I'm sure it was your fault."

"Well, I will pay for it, but I don't see that I should," said I, disgusted at his selfishness. "Put it down to my tick."

"Very well, sir. But I should be obliged if you could settle your account soon. You owe me pretty well on to a pound now, and this other young gentleman owes more. You know, sir, you said you would pay me before this."

"All right. I'll pay you soon. I haven't any money with me," said Abbing abruptly.

"Thank you, sir. Perhaps you'll call to-morrow and settle," she cried, as we were leaving the shop.

Abbing muttered some inaudible reply, and we fairly took to flight.

"What an old cheat she is," he said; "I shan't pay her till after the holidays. She knows very well that fellows haven't any tin just now."

"I can't pay her. But I say, perhaps she'll tell Vialls."

"Not she. How is she to know that we board there? I never told her my name; and, for all she knows, there may be half-a-dozen Smiths in the school besides you."

"I tell you what it is, though, we mustn't go near her shop again this half."

"I wish I had never gone near it at all. You told me she wouldn't ask for the money till after the holidays."

"Well, she hasn't any business to."

"I believe you knew all the while that she would come down upon us now."

"Hang it, Smith, you needn't get into a wax about it."

"I'm not getting into a wax," said I, angrily.

"Yes, you are. You are as sulky as a crow with the toothache."

"You are a nasty, sneaking fellow, Abbing. I think you like to get other fellows into scrapes."

"Stuff! I won't walk with you if you go on this way."

"Well, I'm sure I don't want to walk with you. I never saw such a cad in all my life."

"Did you never look in the looking-glass?" taunted Abbing.

"Take that," I cried, hitting him right on the mouth. "Haven't you had enough of checking me?"

"You're a bully," blubbered Abbing, spitting out a little blood, and trying to make me think that he was very much hurt. "If you weren't bigger than me you wouldn't dare to hit me."

"I'm not bigger than you, and I'm not a bully. I'll give you a good licking if you say so again."

"If you do, I'll tell Vialls," threatened Abbing shrinking back.

"*Tell* then!" said I scornfully. "Tell away as much as you like, and see if you are not well kicked by all the fellows afterwards," and with this I turned on my heel, and walked off very much disgusted with Abbing and still more with myself.

How was I to pay all that money, when I had only sixpence a-week! I had got myself into a nice scrape by my folly. If it came to the ears of Mr Vialls I should be severely punished, especially as he would be likely to learn also about our going out of bounds. And worse than that, I was expecting my father to come to Whitminster at the examination, and I would rather get a dozen canings than have him know of my getting into debt.

All that could be done was to keep away from Mrs Matthews' shop, and to trust to hearing no more from her till after the holidays. So I did for some days, during which I experienced all the misery of feeling myself to be dishonest—of knowing that there was some one whom I could not dare to look in the face—of being obliged to sneak round by back ways rather than pass through a certain street. It was a good lesson for me never to get myself into such a position again. This is the sort of pleasure that is bought by wrong doing. Sooner or later we shall have to pay for it, and dearly; of that we may be sure.



We did not hear from Mrs Matthews, and we were almost beginning to hope that we were safe. She did not know our address, and it only wanted a fortnight to the holidays.

But one day when I came home from school, I found a book and a note addressed to me. The book was my Latin Grammar, which I had missed for some days, and as I took it up, suddenly it flashed across me for the first time that I had left it in Mrs Matthews' shop, and that my name and address were written inside of it. I hurriedly broke open the note and found it to be an account amounting to seventeen shillings and eight-pence, with the following message written below in a very scrawly hand. Mrs Matthews' talents lay in the direction of tarts and cheesecakes rather than of literature and composition :

"Mrs Matthews will be obliged if Mr Smith will pay the inclosed at onse, if he does not I must speke to docter Pearson."

"Surely that's a love letter," said Lessing, watching me. "How pleased Smith does look!"

"Shut up," said I, angrily, crumpling the note in my hand, and shoving it into my pocket. How I wished I had courage to go and tell Mr Vialls, and have it over.

As soon as I could get Abbing by himself, I showed him the letter, and he was now thoroughly frightened.

"Oh, I say, we shall be in for it if she tells Pearson or Vialls! You must manage to pay her somehow or other."

"It's all very well to say that, but *how*? I would give anything to be able to pay her, but I haven't got a penny; you know that as well as I do."

"Let me think," said Abbing. "Look here! Write home to your people, and tell them that you want some money for a subscription to the cricket."

"But I don't, and I won't," I exclaimed.

I was too cross to be afraid of Abbing's laughing at me this time, and even if I had been afraid to speak out my mind, I don't think he could have made me consent to deceive my father.

Poor fellow! he didn't know what it was to be trusted. I have since heard that his father was a severe, suspicious man, who never believed a word his son said, and so made him a liar from his childhood.

"Well, I'll tell you what you might do," he went on. "Sell that watch of yours. I dare say you'd get more than a pound for it."

"But they would be sure to ask me at home what had become of it."

"Couldn't you tell them you had lost it, or something of the sort?—Come now, Bob, you needn't be so particular."

"Look here, Abbing," said I—afterwards I was astonished at my boldness—"I'm not going to tell any lies to my governor, and you needn't ask me to. If I can get the money fairly, I shall pay this account; if I can't, I suppose we shall just have to take the consequences."

"You will, I suppose. But, I say, Smith, you're not going to be such a sneak as to let me in for this scrape. You needn't mention my name, you know."

"Oh, don't you fear! I'm not a sneak. I shan't say a word about you, if you are afraid."

"I'm not afraid any more than you," grumbled Abbing; "but what's the good of getting into a scrape if you can keep out of it?"

I could give no answer to this question, so I left Abbing, and went off to reflect sorrowfully over my troubles, and how I might get out of them. So far as I could see, there was only one thing to be done. None of the boys could lend me so much money at that time of the half, even if they would. I must go to Mrs Matthews, and persuade her to wait. If she would not, why—what must be must be; but, like other philosophers, young and old, I found little comfort in this truthful axiom.

Next day, which happened to be a holiday, I stayed away from cricket, and betook myself to Mrs Matthews' at a time when I thought that none of our boys were likely to be there. I passed and repassed the shop two or three times before I had the courage to enter it; and at length, making sure that there were no other customers, I made a dash in and presented myself before Mrs Matthews in a very nervous and shamefaced condition.

"How do you do, Master Smith? I hope you have come to pay me that little account," she said sharply.

She had always been so civil and polite that I was quite taken aback by her altered tone, and the speech I had intended to address her with was driven out of my head. I could only stammer out something about paying her soon.

“‘Soon’ ‘soon’—that’s just it. It’s always ‘soon,’—and ‘soon’ means never, I expect. Here you come, day after day, eating my things and never paying me as much as a single penny; and when I ask you to settle my account, and not let me be done out of my money, it’s always ‘soon.’ ‘Soon,’ indeed! I wonder what you call ‘soon!’”

“Look here, Mrs Matthews,” said I, in despair. “I’m very sorry that I can’t pay you at once, because I haven’t any money; but I promise you I shall as soon as I get it.”

“There it is! ‘Haven’t got any money!’ Why do you have cakes, and tarts, and things, if you haven’t money to pay for them? That’s like a young gentleman, isn’t it?”

I had not a word to say for myself, and she went on:

“And there’s that other one who comes along with you! Not a bit of his money have I seen since Christmas, and he would never so much as tell me his name. I’ll not be hard on you if you’ll tell me his name and where he lives.”

I hesitated. I had half a mind to tell her. It would only serve Abbing right. But no, I said to myself, I promised not to tell about Abbing; he may be a sneak,

but I won't. So I gave no other answer than an in-audible mutter.

"Of course, you want to hide him! You're all alike, you young gentlemen, that one would think ought to know better. You think nothing of cheating poor people out of their money. But I'm an honest woman, and I'll have what you owe me, or I'll ask your master why. He'll see me paid fast enough, and I'll find out that other one some day; you may tell him that from me."

"Don't tell Mr Vialls," said I, eagerly. "You can't think what a scrape I shall be in if you do. I really do intend to pay you, and I promise to do it the very first day after the holidays."

"A fine story! And how am I to know that you'll come back here after the holidays? No, you'll not take me in that way. Look here, now! I'll give you till the end of the half, and no longer. If you don't pay me before that, I'll speak to Mr Vialls as sure as I'm a living woman, and it will serve you right if he gives you a good tanning. That'll teach you to run up debts that you can't pay, my lad. Now, get out of the shop, for I'm busy; and don't show yourself here again without you have got the money."

I slunk out of the shop, feeling bitterly humiliated and disheartened. I had not made things a bit better, except by putting off the time when Mr Vialls was to be informed of my debt. How could I get so much money before the end of the half? Stop, there was one way!

My father had promised me a sovereign if I could get a prize. But what chance had I of a prize? I was scarcely half way up my form, and not likely to improve my position at the examination. Then I remembered that special prizes for geography and history were to be given to the lower part of the school. I might try for one of them. I always liked geography better than my other lessons, and might have a good chance if I worked hard at this subject and nothing else. But the examination for it was to be in a week, and I had taken no pains as yet to get up the work. Harry Kennedy had been hard at it for weeks, and all the boys thought him quite sure of success. Still I might try.





## CHAPTER XI.

### TRYING FOR A PRIZE.

**N**OW that the holidays were so close at hand, the discipline of the school was considerably relaxed.

As we were supposed to be preparing for examination, we were allowed to get up our work almost when and how we pleased. In the mornings we might go out or stay at home as we liked. And as it was splendid weather, I need not say what most of us did. A few of the elder boys stayed in-doors and worked in their studies; one or two lazy-boned fellows did the same thing in bed. Others took their books into the fields, and got up ancient history and Euclid sitting on a stile, or lying under a tree, with what success I should not like to say. But most did their preparation, such as it was, in the evening, and went out at unearthly hours in the morning to birdnest or to bathe.

Bathing was the favourite amusement, for, as the river was some distance off, it was not often, except on occasions like this, that we got a chance of a dip. Oh!

these were happy hours when, in the bright, fresh June morning, we hurried down to the grassy bank, and plunged into the blue water, laughing, splashing, and ducking! Then we would scramble out and run merrily over the daisies, shouting for glee, flicking each other with our towels, and disturbing the placid repast of sundry forlorn cows, who were wont to regard our proceedings with grave looks of surprise and disapproval. Then in again, and more splashing and shouting and swimming, and then more scampering over the grass,—for we were careless and half-mad with happiness, and there were no restraints to be set at nought, or trousers to be torn! Then out to dress in the highest spirits, with a new elasticity thrilling through every limb. And then home, laughing and chatting in the “great joy of living,” while the dull old world was still snoring behind its unopened shutters!

But this pleasure I had to deny myself from the time that I resolved to try for the geography prize. I found that I could study best in the morning, when most of the other boys were out, so I got up at half-past five and went steadily on till breakfast, forcing into my head page after page of the subject. How I did come to hate these mountains in Asia and those islands in the Pacific Ocean, and how I longed to be out bathing or playing with the rest! But as often as I was almost ready to give up, the thought of Mrs Matthews’ account came into my mind, and once more I plunged into my task.

One morning I was sitting alone in the school-room,



poring over my atlas, when a troop of boys returned from bathing, and rushed into the room, making such a noise, that all work was next to impossible. Some of them seemed rather astonished to find me thus occupied, for too great diligence had not hitherto been a fault of mine.

"Oh! My eye! Surely not!" cried Abbing, whom I had not taken into my confidence about the prize. "Is Smith swotting? I'd as soon expect to see a grizzly-bear smoking a pipe on the top of the Rocky Mountains."

"What are you cramming at?" asked Lessing. "Oh! geography. Let me examine you. Will you have the kindness to state the exact latitude and longitude of the Cannibal Islands?"

"Listen to Lessing trying to imitate Vialls," said Wood. "You can't do it a bit, old Lessing. I say, Smith, have you any chance for the geography? I was thinking of going in for it myself."

"Well, you may have some chance. I'm not going to try," said Abbing.

"No, they haven't," said Lessing; "the Kangaroo is sure to get it."

"No, I am not," protested Kennedy.

"Yes you are, you ugly little beast. You are a whale at geography. You've been cramming it up for the last month—you know you have: and then, when they were bringing you in a cage from Australia, you looked about you and picked up some idea of all the countries you

passed. What chance have we with an animal that has been half round the world !”

“I believe Kennedy is sure to get it,” said Phillips. “His maps are splendid, and you know he was a long way a-head of all the other fellows at the geography examination last half.”

“Did you ever notice, Jemima, that fellows who are good at geography are generally fearful muffs ?” said Abbing.

“Oh, yes ! Who’s talking about muffs ?” growled George Kennedy, turning sharply round. He sometimes pitched into his brother himself, but he never liked to hear any one else say a word against him, even in fun. So Abbing was silenced, and retreated upstairs to complete his toilet, followed by the rest of the party, who were mostly attired in trousers, jackets, night-shirts, and slippers.

Lessing stopped behind to mark the day off in his calendars. When the holidays were about two months off, Lessing was in the habit of establishing a calendar on the fly-leaf of every one of his books, and it was his great delight to mark off the days as they passed, and to count those that remained. When only a week was left, he made fresh calendars, in which every hour was marked ; and so it may be imagined that the process of making up his accounts every morning was rather a tedious one. But when he had finished, and gone to his dormitory, I found myself alone with Phillips, who had returned to feed some silk worms. And then, feeling

miserable, and in need of a confidant, I opened my heart to Phillips, pouring out all my troubles, telling him of my debt, and my hopes of being able to pay it if I got a prize. Phillips was a kind-hearted fellow, and said what he could to encourage me ; but I saw plainly that he thought I had no chance of the prize. Harry Kennedy's knowledge of geography was looked upon as something wonderful, though he was not distinguished in any other study. He was naturally fond of it, and often spent his play hours in drawing maps for his own amusement.

But as I had gone on so far, I resolved to persevere, and worked hard till the day when the prize was decided. How I wished now that I had attended to my lessons more during the half ! It was all very well to wish ; that wouldn't mend matters. At least I would do better next half, so I resolved. In this way my trouble was useful to me. Well ! it's over now, and many years have passed since that anxious week. I can scarcely remember how anxious I was. But looking back on it, and on all other troubles which once vexed and worried me, I see how I got good out of them all.

At length the day of the examination for the geography prize came. It was to be decided by a paper set by Mr Williamson, and there were only five boys in for it besides Kennedy and myself. When I first looked at the paper, I thought I never should be able to answer the questions ; but when I had sat for a little time por-

ing over it, and biting my pen, I began to feel more hopeful, and set desperately to work, making shots at every question which I was not sure about, and glancing up every now and then to see how my rivals were getting on. Kennedy was writing away, but the rest looked puzzled. It was a very hard paper, containing not only the usual amount of mountains, rivers, and maps, but several horrible questions about constitutions, and climates, and trade winds, and other abstruse subjects, which I never heard of till I crammed them for this examination.

We were allowed two hours to do the paper in ; but before the end of the first, all the rest had given up except Kennedy and myself. Presently Kennedy, too, got up and handed in his papers.

“How easily he has answered the questions,” I thought, and almost felt inclined to give it up also ; but took courage and went on, scribbling all I knew as fast as I could till the two hours came to an end.

“Well, Smith, if quantity is to decide it you’ll get the prize,” said Mr Williamson as I gave in my papers. “Your answers cover as much paper as all the rest put together. We must see what the quality is.”

I smiled feebly and went away. I was going home, and just as I was passing through the yard, I caught sight of Mrs Matthews on the road outside. I started and shrunk back behind the stone work of the school gate, and my heart began to flutter as I thought that she was perhaps looking for Mr Vials. It was a great relief

to me to see her pass the school and go on her way with a basket in her hand.

As there were so few candidates for the prize, Mr Williamson had promised to let us know the result of the examination without delay. But even if I were successful and wrote home for the promised sovereign, I might not get it in time. There were only four days to the holidays, and perhaps Mrs Matthews would not wait so long. Then my father might put off giving me the sovereign till he came himself. In four days he was coming to Whitminster, and I could not bear to think that he should find me in disgrace; for a look of displeasure from him was the punishment which I dreaded more than all others.

Next morning I was going to bathe, but the weather had changed and it turned out to be wet. The rain cleared off about half-an-hour before breakfast, and I went out to walk on the road running past the school-house. When I had strolled on about a quarter of a mile I met Abbing, who was looking very downcast.

"I say, Smith, I'm afraid we're in for it after all," was his news. "Some of the fellows were at Matthews' yesterday, and they heard her calling you no end of names, and swearing that she was going to tell Vials about you if you didn't fork out."

"I wish she would tell, and have done with it. I have had no peace since I got into that scrape."

"Oh don't talk that way. I know what you are going to say next. You are going to tell me that it

was my fault and all that sort of thing. As if you were obliged to go tick because I did!"

I didn't feel inclined to quarrel with Abbing again, so I let him run on talking about Mrs Matthews and trying to devise means of pacifying her. He pretended to be very sorry for me, but I could see that he was in a great fright on his own account, for if Mr Vialls came to look into the matter, it was likely that his own dishonesty would be found out. And it will have been already seen, that Master Abbing's boldness went no further than his tongue.

We had turned and were coming home when we saw the Kangaroo running to meet us. While he is coming up I shall take the opportunity of telling the reader how Harry Kennedy got this nickname. One day in school Mr Williamson asked him to spell kangaroo. He did so, and then Mr Williamson said, "What is a kangaroo, Kennedy?"

But Harry thought that the master could not mean to give him two questions, and he answered, in a tone of inquiry—

"*Me*, sir?"

"A very good answer, Kennedy," said Mr Williamson drily.

It was a very small joke, but schoolboys are amused at small jokes, and at extremely small jokes when made by their masters; so the other boys laughed loudly. And as Harry was always jumping and frisking about, the name seemed appropriate and stuck to him, long after most of

the boys had forgotten how it was given. He told me the story himself one day.

He now came running up to us in a great hurry, shouting out when he was some yards off—

“I say, Smith, you’ve got the geography prize.”

“No, I haven’t!” exclaimed I.

“Yes, you have. I met Williamson just now, and he told me your paper was the best by a long way.”

“I say,” whispered Abbing, “write home to your governor, and tell him you’ve got a prize, and ask for some money.”

I nodded, and frowned, and hurried on, trying hard to seem indifferent before him and Kennedy. But when I got home, and heard the same news from other boys, I could scarcely conceal my delight. I danced about the room, and laughed, and shouted till some one said—

“What a fellow you are, Smith! Did you never get a prize before that you should be in such a state of mind about it. Now, he’s going to write to his mammy to tell her. Give her my love, Smith, you know.”

But I was too excited to mind him, though this kind of chaff generally made me furious. I got down my desk, and wrote off the news to my father, begging him to send me the sovereign he had promised me by the first post. After breakfast, I put the letter in the post on my way to school, and spent the rest of the day in fearing that my father would refuse; that his answer might not come at once; that Mrs Matthews might not wait a day longer; and so forth.

But all went right. Next morning's post brought me the anxiously-expected letter. There seemed to be no money inside of it, and I was bitterly disappointed. But when I had torn it open I found a post-office order for one pound, and a few lines from my father, saying how glad they all were of my success, and bidding me expect him by the first train on prize day.

The very first moment that I could, I flew to the post-office, and cashed my order, and then to Mrs Matthews' shop. I didn't slink in this time, but held my head up, and presented myself before my creditor, with all the boldness of a man who has money in his pocket. When she found that I had come to pay my debt in full, she became all at once profoundly civil, and apologized for having dunned me.

"I'm sorry I troubled you about it," she said ; "but you see, sir, it's a hard thing to know what to do, and poor people can't afford to lose their money. If you only knew how little I make out of this shop, now—"

But I was in no humour for a long talk, so thanking her, and gathering up my change, I made off before she could ask me about Abbing.

I was so elated at feeling free from the debt which had given me so much annoyance, that I incautiously ventured to pass through one of the chief streets, and ran right in the way of Mr Vials, who at once pounced upon me, and gave me two hours' detention for being out of bounds, and the promise of a caning next time.



But I scarcely minded a bit, though I lost the best part of my half-holiday. I had got out of debt, and one thing I was sure of, that I would never get into that predicament again, if I could help it.





## CHAPTER XII.

### BREAKING-UP.

**A**T length the breaking up day came, and early in the morning Dr Pearson's household was astir and full of activity and boisterous mirth. Here and there boys were rushing about collecting their various belongings or clamouring for Mrs Bramble's assistance in packing them. Others were dancing through the schoolroom and playground testifying their joy in various ways, of which the favourite seemed to be pure and simple howling. A few were attiring themselves gorgeously with a view to making a fit display at the giving of prizes. I was not much of a dandy at that or any other time, but on this occasion I felt it would be proper to sacrifice somewhat to the graces, and to that end spent half-an-hour in my dormitory, with a result that was quite satisfactory to myself, though my ideas of extra adornment were confined to borrowing another boy's watch and chain, and putting about half a pot of pomade on my hair.

While I was thus engaged, there was a great row in the passage, and in rushed George and Harry Kennedy and Abbing, flinging down their pillows, with which they had just been taking part in a scrimmage in a neighbouring dormitory. On breaking-up day even pillow fights were winked at by the authorities.

"What a swell!" exclaimed Abbing, throwing himself into an attitude of amazement. "Doesn't he look like a prize ox? I say, Smith, I shall laugh when I see you getting your prize. These fellows who get prizes always look so silly, don't they, Kangaroo?"

"You'll never look silly when you are getting a prize, and for a very good reason," quoth the Kangaroo.

"Oh yes! Don't you talk, you Australian quadruped. As if I couldn't get a prize as soon as you, if I liked to try?"

"Oh, of course!"

"Well, you see Kennedy did try, but he didn't get a prize," boasted I. "Never mind, Kangaroo, you couldn't expect to win when I was trying."

"Couldn't he?" exclaimed George Kennedy, always jealous of his brother's honour. "He could have beat you easily, if he liked."

"But he didn't," I retorted, triumphantly.

"Because he didn't try."

"Shut up," whispered Harry, giving his brother a nudge, which I was not meant to see.

But I did see it—both saw it and heard the whisper, and when they had left the room a thought suddenly came

into my mind, "Had Kennedy tried his best?" Everyone had expected him to beat me, and Mr Williamson had scolded him for not answering one or two of the simplest questions. He had been quite eager to tell me of my success, and I had noticed how pleased he seemed about it.

All my elation at once disappeared. I could not bear to think that I had got this prize without deserving it. The very suspicion made me quite unhappy, and I felt that I must have the matter explained. And it so happened that when I went downstairs I found the Kangaroo alone, putting on his boots in the lavatory.

"Well, Smith, I shan't be in this old place again for six weeks," he said, as I came in.

"I say, Kennedy," I burst out, all at once, "did you try your best to get that prize?"

Kennedy looked up and smiled, and seemed puzzled what to say.

"Well, old fellow, I didn't try my best, certainly. Phillips told me about the scrape you were in, and when I knew why you were so anxious to get the prize, I didn't care about having it."

"Oh! Kennedy——"

"I'm very glad you have got it."

"But I won't take it."

"But you must."

"I won't. It wouldn't be fair. I don't deserve it. I'll tell Williamson."

"Why, man, if I choose to give up my chance, that's my look out. You've got the prize, and you must keep it."

"But how shall I ever make up to you? I say, Kennedy, it's an awful shame of me to take this prize."

"Not a bit, I tell you. You can easily make it up to me. The next time we are going in for a prize together, you can back out, and give me your chance. That will be fair."

"I'm sure I will. Upon my honour, Kennedy, you're the jolliest fellow I ever knew in my life."

"Shut up," said the Kangaroo; and just then our conversation was put an end to by the appearance of a hilarious band, who rushed in bellowing—

"Oh! Billy, can't you come, to hear the *Dulce Domum* sung?"

I had liked Kennedy before, but now I was devoted to him. All that morning I hung about him, feeling sheepishly grateful, and not knowing how to express my gratitude. But I thought that nothing would be too great to do or bear for him.

There was but little time for professions of friendship, however. I had to see about my box being packed, and then came breakfast; and after breakfast, I hurried down to the station to meet my father.

The rest of the day was all bustle and excitement. I waited for half-an-hour at the station, tormenting myself by fears that something would prevent my father from coming, but in due time the train came steaming up to the platform, and there was his dear old face look-

ing out of one of the carriage windows. How glad I was to see him and to hear all the home news! the three months I had been at Whitminster seemed like three years. And how proud I was to walk arm in arm with him through the streets and show him over the school, and let the boys see him! Some of them had their fathers to exhibit too, but I thought that none was to be compared to mine, none so kind and so wise and so manly. Ah! blessed love that ennobles those we love—but I must take care, or I shall be sneered at by the critics for introducing sentiment into a schoolboy story.

At eleven o'clock we assembled in the great school-room, which was filled to overflowing with our friends and relations, and the ceremony of the day was begun. After prayers, the headmaster made a speech; it was not often that we heard Dr Pearson's voice, so we applauded vigorously. Then the prize poems and exercises were read by the successful competitors, and as they were all in Latin and Greek they were loudly cheered by everyone among the audience, though I doubt if there were many present who understood a word of them. Then Markham, the head boy, gave a piece out of one of Cicero's orations, and this was also received with enthusiasm. We—the small boys—had a very faint idea as to who Cicero was, but we thought he must have been a clever fellow if he could have beaten Markham at making an oration. Afterwards came some English recitations, which were always a great feature of the prize day. I must confess that there was a good deal of humbug about

these said recitations. Delighted mammas who heard them went away with the impression that we all learned to do this sort of thing at school, whereas, the fact was, that not a word of English was read or recited in our school except on prize days and such occasions, and then only by a few boys who were chosen out and "coached up" for the occasion, by—don't be astonished—Mrs Pearson. This good lady was not considered as one of the assistant masters, but she did more for the school than her husband, and this was one of the duties she undertook, and performed very well, I must say.

Wood first appeared upon the dais from which the recitations were given, and after a profound bow began rather nervously, "The Battle of Hohenlinden." He went on swimmingly for a little, but presently catching sight of his sisters, who were sitting just in front, and his little brother grinning at him, he got confused and almost broke down. However, by the aid of some very audible prompting from Mr Williamson, he came safely to an end, and was rewarded by great applause.

Then came Phillips, spotless as to his garments, and well brushed as to his hair, and gave "Casabianca," which was a great success. The elegance and girlishness for which we rather laughed at Phillips, were in his favour now. The ladies whispered to each other "what a gentlemanly-looking boy!" and complimented him so much when he had finished, that he was blushing all the rest of the morning. The Kangaroo, who followed him with a piece from Macaulay's lay of Horatius, did not

please the ladies so much, but we boys cheered him tremendously. You could easily see that he was a favourite. Then Kennedy Primus and another boy did a scene from Shakspeare. Next came old Lessing with one of Hood's comic poems, which he did capitally. Last of all there was the quarrel between Fitz James and Roderick Dhu, and this was pronounced by us the greatest success. Macdonald, the boy who did Roderick Dhu, was a Scotchman, and he came out for the occasion in a kilt, plaid, and dirk, in which he looked most ferocious and romantic, all the more as he had a tremendous shock of red curly hair. I don't suppose you could find a poem that boys appreciate more than the *Lady of the Lake*. Shakspeare and Wordsworth we thought very clever sort of men in their way, but Scott was the fellow who knew how to write poetry. Didn't we shout and hurrah when Macdonald waved his hand and stamped his foot, and exclaimed—

“ . . . . How say'st thou now ?  
These are Clan Alpine's warriors true,  
And, Saxon, I am Roderick Dhu ! ”

Then the prizes were given away, and there was more cheering as each boy came forward smiling, blushing, and trying to look modest. I can't say that I felt any particular pride myself. On the contrary, I was rather shamefaced, and couldn't help glancing towards Harry Kennedy as I walked back to my seat. But he grinned in the most friendly way, and was the first to come forward to congratulate me.

Then came one or two speeches full of good advice,



which, I am afraid, under the circumstances, were not listened to by most of us. Then the boys of the Minster Choir struck up "*Dulce domum*," and to conclude the performances, we cheered again till we were hoarse for the ladies, for the masters, for everybody. If you had seen the old schoolroom, full of merry faces and gay dresses, you would have found it difficult to remember that far less pleasant scenes were sometimes acted there.

At length it was all over ; the crowd had dispersed ; we had said good-bye to our friends ; Harry Kennedy and I had engaged to correspond during the holidays ; most of the boys rushed off to the station, for our good friends' long speeches had nearly caused some of them to miss the train.

There was still an hour or two before our train started, so my father and I went over the Minster, and then strolled down to the bank of the river. As we were going along he asked me,—

"By-the-bye, Bob, why did you want that sovereign in such a hurry?"

I hung my head. I would have given anything that he should not know, but I could not deceive my father. I told him about my debt to Mrs Matthews.

He wasn't angry, as I had expected, but he put his arm round my neck, and said, in a way that I shall never forget :

"Ah, Bob! I like to hear that my son has got a prize, but I would far rather know that he was honest, and self-denying, and obedient."



## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE HOLIDAYS.

**H**OME again! What delight does a man ever have like that of a schoolboy returning home for his holidays? I was almost mad with excitement when I came within view of the familiar spots, the pool where I had so often fished, the wood where I had natted, the meadow in which I used to play cricket. Then the dear old house came into sight; and at length I saw the loving, joyful faces, and was locked in my mother's arms.

No schoolboy returning from school for the first time need be told how I expatiated on the glories of that wonderful place; the tales of daring exploits with which I astonished my sisters; and how I excited the awe and admiration of my small brother, now a pupil of my former instructor, Mr Brown. I treated his school experiences with the utmost contempt, humbled him by an account of the great cricket match, in which Henderson made ninety-eight, and carried out his bat;

and harrowed his young soul by a description of Mr Vials and his cane. The Whitminster Grammar School, according to me, was a boy's paradise of amusements, and scrapes, and punishments ; though, of course, it was only when I got away from these last that I was enthusiastic about them. If a boy is not proud of his school, and its institutions, and does not boast of them to other boys, depend upon it, there is something far wrong about either the boy or the school.

In like manner, I bragged and boasted to my late companions, giving them to understand that they didn't know what school life was. Most of them seemed willing to agree with me, and to treat me with due respect, but Bill Barlett, a big, coarse lout, laughed at the airs I gave myself, and offered to lick me or any other Whitminster fellow in five minutes. I was much disgusted by this impertinence, and resolved to avoid Bill's society for the future.

This was not the only snub I got. I must needs pay a visit to Mr Brown's school, and patronised him to such an extent that he told me to walk out again. Then I spoke impudently to him, and he complained to my father, who gave me a rebuke that made me feel very much ashamed of myself.

"I shouldn't so much care, Bob," he said, "if you were to be rude to any one who could hit you back if he liked. Go and be rude to your masters at Whitminster, and take what you get by it, if you choose. But it is cowardly, and not like a gentleman, to be impertinent

to your old master, just because you think he is no longer able to punish you."

Two boys, of the name of Cane, were so much delighted by my account of Whitminster, that they gave their father no rest till he consented to send them there after the holidays. They were a queer couple of brothers. Though they were twins, you would never have guessed it. Tom, who declared he was five minutes older than his brother, was small, slender, and dark; while Ben, the other brother, was big, fat, and fair. Tom was clever at his lessons, and of a rather unpleasant temper; Ben was as stupid as a post, but a perfect lump of good nature. Next half they went with me to Dr Pearson's, and we shall hear more about them afterwards.

I had faithfully promised to write to Harry Kennedy, but with true schoolboy carelessness I had forgotten to get his address. So I couldn't ask him to come and stay with us, as my mother wished me to do; and perhaps this was just as well. Schoolboy friendships often come to a sudden end by Damon and Pythias seeing too much of each other at first. I don't know that we should have quarrelled, for they say it takes two to make a quarrel, and the Kangaroo was the best tempered fellow in the world; but perhaps if we had lived in the same house for a fortnight we might have grown tired of each other, the ardour of our friendship cooling down.

When I had been at home for about three weeks, all

our family removed to Harstone, where my father had taken a house for a month. Harstone is the great sea-bathing resort of our part of the country, and I expected to enjoy staying there very much. What was my delight, then, on the first morning after our arrival, when I had run down to the beach with my little brother, and plunged eagerly into the blue, sparkling water, to hear a well-known voice close beside me, as I rose from ducking my head beneath a wave—

“Hallo, Smith!”

“Is it you, Kangaroo?”

“How jolly! are you staying at Harstone? Here’s my brother.”

And up came George Kennedy, splashing and puffing and making a great show of swimming, with one leg on the ground. He too hailed me with great cordiality, and on the spot we vowed to be inseparable all the holidays.

I shall never forget that month I spent at Harstone. Splendid weather; nothing to do but enjoy it; the two boys whom I thought the nicest fellows I had ever seen as companions; bathing, boating, and fishing to our heart’s content. We were brimful of happiness, and that is an article of which a boy’s nature can hold a great deal.

But at length, like everything else, it came to an end. In the beginning of August we went to our homes, and in a few days more we met again at school.

I shall not describe how we all came back, more or

less unwillingly, to Dr Pearson's; how we sighed over the flesh-pots of home, and then settled down very contentedly to our thick bread and butter and weak tea; how Mrs Pearson was dignified, and Mrs Bramble affectionate, and Mr Vialls severely gracious, and Mr Williamson boisterously jovial; how we greeted our friends, how we criticised the new boys; how many jokes we made on the unlucky name of the Canes; how we narrated to each other our pleasures and adventures, and how we opened our old books and cautiously handled some new ones, and set to work again in the old way. For a day or two we were very good, and the masters were very indulgent; and then somebody got punished, and somebody broke down in his repetition, and the master waxed wroth, and things went on as usual.

Abbing was back again, grinning and joking as much as ever. He took an early opportunity of telling me that he had satisfied Mrs Matthews, and I told him that I was glad of it, in an indifferent and patronising way. At the beginning of the half I was not going to quarrel, even with Abbing; but I would have him to understand that now that I had such fellows as the Kennedys for my friends, my position in society was a long way above his.





## CHAPTER XIV.

### MY BIG FRIEND.

**T**HIS half, almost all the boys whom the reader has heard of as being my friends and companions had returned to Whitminster, but several of the older boys had left, and consequently there were some studies vacant. To have a study was considered a great honour ; they were always given to those of the boarders who were highest in the school and had been longest in Doctor Pearson's house. There were now in the house only four boys of sufficient standing to be prefects ; they had the largest studies, and were allowed to sleep in them. The rest of the study boys slept in the dormitories, and were allowed to be in their studies only at certain hours in the day.

George Kennedy got a study, to his great satisfaction, and that of his particular friends. His brother and I received a general invitation to visit it, of which we were by no means unwilling to avail ourselves. It was a jolly thing to have a snug little retreat in which we could

sometimes take refuge from the din of the boys' room down stairs, and finish up our lessons in peace, or play chess, or read, or have a quiet chat, or—but schoolboys will easily imagine half-a-hundred ways of employing a spare hour. I remember the interest we took in furnishing this paradise of 8 feet by 3, for which purpose the Kangaroo and I were called into solemn council. The former occupant had left two very rickety chairs and a table. To this Kennedy added some book-shelves and a carpet of gorgeous pattern, which we three spent a considerable part of a half-holiday in choosing. Furthermore, we ornamented the walls with splendid pictures from the "*Illustrated London News*," and fastened up a railway rug by way of curtain across the doorway. The study was then thrown open for the inspection of the public, who pronounced the general effect very fine; and in the evening as many of Kennedy's select friends as could be crammed into it were regaled at a banquet, whereat the two rickety chairs above mentioned came signally to grief.

Harry Kennedy and I found ourselves moved up a form this half. I was so glad that we were not separated, as I was afraid we should have been. The removes were decided by the half-yearly examinations, and I suppose the marks I had got for the geography prize had just turned the scale in my favour. Mr Williamson was still our master, and our lessons were very much the same on the whole; but we left Cæsar, of whom, with his legions and hostages, and settings out to one place and



another, we were beginning to get rather tired, and were plunged into Virgil. At first we were highly pleased with the look of *arma virumque cano*, etc., and roared with laughter when Mr Williamson translated it "a man armed with a cane, with a face as prim as a Trojan." But before long we discovered that the most part of Virgil was no joke, and began to regret old Cæsar, who now seemed not to be such a bad fellow after all. If he did have his verbs half a page off from his nominatives, well, at least they were there if you only took the trouble to look for them; whereas this fellow Virgil was unconscionable enough to do without verbs or nominatives at all sometimes, and you had to supply them, just as if you might be expected to know what he wanted to say! And if you took the first meaning given in the dictionary for any of his words, you were safe to be wrong. But the worst thing was those horrible gods and goddesses that you had to hunt up in the classical dictionary, and remember all about. On the whole, we didn't approve of Virgil, upon further acquaintance.

I was pleased at being removed into a higher form, but I was prouder still of being taken into the second eleven, of which George Kennedy was captain. This was a good thing for me. Instead of loafing about on half-holidays with fellows like Abbing, I went and played cricket, which, to say the least of it, keeps boys out of mischief. Or sometimes—for as autumn drew on we did not play cricket so often—I went long rambles in the country with the Kennedys, or some other boys of that set.

The course of friendship doesn't always run smooth, though. Harry Kennedy was always cheery and good-humoured, and he and I scarcely ever fell out. But George's temper was very changeable, and he still often annoyed me by a kind of patronising manner which he showed towards me. I, on the other hand, was rather vain, and what schoolboys call "cocky," and my own temper was not particularly good ; so it may easily be imagined that George and I had frequent tiffs, which, however, we generally made up in a few hours.

One day I was practising with the second eleven, when the question arose whether or not I had been fairly stumped out, and George Kennedy was called upon to decide it.

"Oh, let it be out, of course," he said. "You've been in for ever so long, Smith, and half-a-dozen fellows have got to get their innings yet."

This was fair enough under the circumstances; but I was highly disgusted, for I had been making some good hits, and felt in a mood to distinguish myself. So I threw down the bat, and sulked off, leaving the other fellows to finish the game without attending to me.

I made my way to some trees at the end of the cricket field, and was going to sit down there and nurse my wrath in solitude, like a schoolboy Achilles, when I came upon a fellow stretched upon the grass, reading a novel. This was Cooper, one of the boarders, a lazy, hulking sort of boy, who wasn't thought much of in the school. He was in the fifth form, and a prefect, but he

didn't seem to associate much with the other fellows of his own standing, and had the reputation of being a bit of a bully. I didn't know much about him, except that he was a patron and particular friend of Abbing, who was often in his study, and learned no good there, it was said.

"Hallo!" said Cooper, shutting up his book; "what are you about, young man?"

"Nothing."

"Doing nothing is a very bad thing for small boys like you. Come a walk with me?"

"All right," said I, rather flattered at being taken notice of by such a big fellow as Cooper.

We climbed a stile and walked through two or three fields, Cooper chatting away very pleasantly, and giving me to understand that he rather liked me, and had wanted to make my acquaintance.

"Come into my study sometimes, and I'll give you a lift with your lessons," he said. "I like having some of you young kids about me, and most of the fellows at this place are such awful fools."

"Cooper can't be half such a bad fellow," I thought to myself. I remembered some queer stories about him, especially one about Henderson, the present head of the school, giving him a tremendous licking for bullying his little brother. Perhaps these tales weren't true. At all events, he seemed inclined to like me, so I was willing to like him.

Presently we heard a shout behind, and saw Abbing running after us as fast as he could.

"Well, you might have waited for me, Cooper," he panted out as he came up. "I shall shorten my valuable life, if I have to run like that again."

"You've been a devilish long time," grunted Cooper. "I thought you were never coming back."

"Well, Paddy Williamson was hanging about the shop, and I had to wait till he was out of the road. Here you are."

He handed Cooper something rolled up in paper.

"That's all right. Now we'll go and enjoy ourselves. Ever smoke, Smith?"

"Yes," replied I, thinking to exalt myself in his opinion; though the fact was, that the only attempt I had ever made in that direction had been of a very elementary nature, and had been attended by disastrous consequences, which I had not forgotten.

We got over a paling and sat down in a little copse, and then Cooper unfastened the package of cigars which Abbing had brought him, and offered me one. I refused at first; but afraid of being thought a muff, I ended by accepting it, and seeing Abbing and Cooper puffing away with much complacency, I took courage, lighted up, and puffed away also, in the full persuasion that I was doing a very fine thing.

I thought Abbing a good deal improved this half. He wasn't nearly so noisy and cocky as he used to be; and though I had kept aloof from him, he seemed anxious to be friends with me. So I forgot all my resolutions of cutting him, and listened in a friendly

spirit to an account of his occupations during the holidays.

Cooper and he did all the conversation, for I was quite taken up by the difficulty of keeping my cigar alight. Presently I began to feel as if I would rather allow it to go out. But it was too late. I grew more and more uncomfortable every minute, and the smell of the other cigars made me worse. At length Cooper saw that I had grown quite pale, and, with a laugh, advised me to go and walk about a little. I had been trying to hide my state from them; but now I was too far gone for shame. I rushed away as hard as I could, and when I got home, lay down full length on my bed, where I passed a couple of hours in a most miserable condition, which I shall leave to the imagination of all boys who, for the first time, have managed to get through half a cigar.

By tea time I felt rather better, but I wasn't able to eat a bit. Unluckily for me Mrs Bramble noticed this, and beckoned me to speak to her afterwards. Mr Vialls was standing beside her as I came up to her seat at the head of the table.

"What is the matter with you, Master Smith? You don't look very well, and you didn't eat anything at tea."

I was just going to answer, when Mr Vialls looked sharply at me, and said :

"You have been smoking, Smith."

I confessed the charge with a blush.

"Oh! naughty boy!" said Mrs Bramble.

"Go into my room," said Mr Vialls.

And following me into this chamber of horrors, he gave me a good caning, and a lecture to correspond, the only part of which that impressed itself on me was the concluding recommendation not to be caught smoking again. I didn't want any caning to help me to make up my mind on that point.

Mr Vialls laboured under the very remarkable delusion that any boy whom he thrashed was bound to be overwhelmed by a sense of shame and disgrace. The fact was, that we were generally rather proud of having had a licking, especially if we had borne it with a respectable amount of fortitude. So off I went to the boy's room, and began trumpeting about that I had just been getting licked for smoking.

"I thought you looked very white," said the Kangaroo. "Were you sick?"

This was putting me in a ludicrous aspect, whereas I considered myself entitled to be looked upon as a hero; so I went off to George Kennedy's study with the same piece of news. I found him hard at work over his lessons, and not much disposed to sympathise with me, even if he were not busy.

"Oh, that's what you were after when you went sneaking off with that great lout Cooper, was it?" he said, turning over the pages of his dictionary. "If you had told us you were going to smoke, we'd have all come and seen the fun."

"I had six cuts," remarked I, "and Vialls did lam into me."

"Served you right, small boy! What business had you to go putting your little stomach out of order with bad cabbage leaves? I say, don't you have anything to do with that fellow Cooper. He's a howling cad, and he'll get you into no end of scrapes if you don't look out."

"Oh! I don't think he's half a bad fellow."

"You don't know anything about him. I tell you, have nothing to do with him. He's a bad lot."

"I think I may choose my friends for myself, Kennedy."

"Well, go and choose as many friends as you like, but get out of my study and let me do my work," said Kennedy, beginning to whistle, and off I went, feeling much offended. After all, Kennedy was an ill-tempered, selfish sort of fellow, and I wasn't going to have him dictating to me.

I next betook myself to Cooper's study, where I found Abbing, and these two listened to my sad tale with much interest and sympathy.

"Poor old Smith!" said Cooper. "Did they lick him? What a shame. That Vialls is about the biggest beast I ever saw in my life. Do you know that he had the impudence to tell *me* that I had been smoking the other day."

"And what did you say?"

"Told him I hadn't, of course. That's what you would have done, Smith, my boy, if you weren't so young and innocent. You should have looked him in

the face, and pretended to be very much surprised, and sworn hard and fast that you had never thought of such a thing in your life. That's the way to fetch old Vialls, because he knows you are telling him a lie, but can't refuse to take your word. Besides, he smokes himself when we have gone to bed, and so he is never quite sure about the smell."

"But Smith is a virtuous youth," laughed Abbing. "He thinks it's a thousand times better to get a licking than to tell a whopper, and all that sort of thing; don't you, Smith?"

I smiled feebly as if to deny the charge of being brave and honest, and we talked away in this strain till Abbing and I had to go down stairs to preparation.

"Come and have supper with me after prayers," whispered Cooper, calling me back, "and don't say anything to Abbing about it, will you?"

"All right," I answered; and after prayers, Cooper and I scrambled upstairs as fast as we could, and bolted ourselves into his study.

"Now, we'll make ourselves jolly," said Cooper, lighting the gas, and producing a pork pie, some bread and cheese and beer, and a bottle of brandy. But we had scarcely sat down before we heard some one trying to open the door.

"Who's there?"

"Me," said Abbing's voice. "Won't you let me in?"

"No; I'm busy," said Cooper, winking at me.

"I want you to help me with my exercise."



"I can't to-night. I'll do it to-morrow morning, after breakfast."

"I thought he would scent us out," said Cooper. "I don't want to be bothered with him to-night. He's a great muff, isn't he?"

"Yes," said I, with my mouth full of pork pie.

"He's not up to anything. Now, you are a different sort of fellow, I'll bet. I say, Smith, you be my jackal, will you? I like to have one of you small fellows about me, and I am tired of that Abbing."

Highly flattered, I signified my willingness to become his "jackal," and then by way of showing him that I was worthy of such an honour, and by no means a muff like Abbing, I proceeded to tell him some tales of my exploits, exhibiting myself in the light of a most daring and wicked character. Cooper listened with much approbation, and presently interrupted me with—

"I say! Are you game for some awful fun?"

"What is it?" said I, feeling rather uneasy at the idea that I was going to be called upon to put my principles into immediate practice, for, as the reader knows, I was very far from being the reckless evildoer that I had been trying to make myself out.

"Let's go out to-night. I'll show you such a lark!"

"Go out?"

"Yes; I often go out at night."

"I don't think I shall. I've got a cold, and I am afraid of making it worse."

"Nonsense. You're afraid of being caught—that's it."

"No ; I'm not."

"There's not the slightest chance of being found out, unless Vialls takes it into his head to go and see if you are in bed. Look here, have some brandy."

I took some, and though I felt strongly inclined to spit it out again, I made an effort to finish the glass, because I thought it was rather a fine thing to do.

"Abbing and I are the only two fellows who know of this dodge for getting out, and you must promise not to tell any one else. Now, won't you come? Why man, you are not afraid to do what a muff like Abbing has often done."

Whether it was that I couldn't bear to be outdone by Abbing in boldness and naughtiness, or that the brandy had got into my head, and made me pot valiant, I don't know ; but I consented to go with him, though I didn't feel at all happy about it.

Cooper seemed to be afraid I might change my mind, for he lost no time in starting. First of all he put away the remnants of the supper, and laid a pillow beneath his bedclothes, so as to look, when the gas was turned off, as if he were in bed.

"That's in case old Vialls pokes his nose in," he said. "Now, come along. You come after me, and make as little noise as you can."

Listening for a moment to make sure that no one was in the passage, we stole out, and began groping our way cautiously up a narrow stair which led to the sick room, at present empty, and one or two small dormi-

tories, the inmates of which we heard chattering away very cheerfully.

"Just as well they are not larking about the passage, or we should have to wait," whispered Cooper, catching my arm, and dragging me to the end of the passage.

Here there was a great lumber-room which was used for keeping the boys' trunks in, and was scarcely ever entered except at the beginning and end of a half. It was generally kept locked, but Cooper produced a key and cautiously opened the door, which he shut again as soon as we had entered.

By the moonlight we groped our way through a pile of boxes to the window, which looked out on a small gymnasium belonging to the schoolhouse. A sloping ladder, on which we were accustomed to perform feats of agility, just reached up to this window, and now that I saw how easy it was to get down by it, I wondered that the idea had never struck any one before.

"Do you see the dodge now?" said Cooper, nudging me. "But, I say, you mustn't tell any one, or we shall have a lot of small brats climbing out here, and the thing will be found out."

We opened the window, climbed down the ladder, got over a low wall into the garden, and then had no difficulty in scrambling through the hedge into the road.

"Here we are," said Cooper. "Now, young Smith, I'll show you some fun. We go and rout up Sargent, and have a lark."

Sargent was one of the town boys, who bore no very

good reputation in the school ; and when I heard his name, I began to be more afraid than ever I should get into some dreadful scrape. To tell the truth, though there was a certain excitement about being out at this forbidden hour, I would have given a good deal to have been back again and safe in bed. Half-a-dozen ways in which my absence might be discovered occurred to me, and I daren't think of what would be the consequence. But still less could I show Cooper that I was afraid ; so I put on a reckless air, and laughed and talked so loud, that he told me to "hold my confounded row in case Vialls or some other brute of that sort might be prowling about."

Sargent lived in the Minster Green, and as we were passing through Bellevue Terrace, on our way to his house, another idea struck Cooper.

"Here's Miss Wilbraham's school," he said ; "let's go and serenade the girls. They are a regular larky set. Let's try to fetch them to the windows, and then we'll perhaps have old Wilbraham at us with the broomstick."

I agreed to this proposal sorely against my will ; but I couldn't draw back now. I was in for any scrape that fellow Cooper might choose to lead me into. But I thought it was very poor fun indeed ; for, setting aside the fear of punishment, I had not got the length of being happy in doing what I knew to be wrong.

"This is the house, I believe. Now, stick by me, and be as quiet as you can."

Bellevue Terrace was a row of semi-detached houses, with gardens in front stretching down to the road. Cooper pushed open the gate of one of those, and we stole over the lawn and ensconced ourselves behind a laurel bush before the house, several windows of which were lighted up.

"They're going to bed. Now we'll fetch them to the window;" and Cooper took up a handful of gravel, and threw it at one of the top windows."

"They know what that means. Sargent often comes and has a lark of this kind. By Jove! here they are!"

A shadow appeared at the window, and it was pushed open; and at the same time, the light disappeared.

Cooper began to whistle.

"Oh! isn't this fun?" he whispered, nudging me vigorously.

"Yes," said I dolefully.

"I say, pretty Jemima, is that you?" said Cooper, in a loud whisper.

The window was pushed wider open, and we could see a face peeping cautiously out of it.

"Oh! Jemima, you don't know how I love you," Cooper went on. "Don't go away. I want to speak to you. Never mind old mother Wilbraham. She's snoring fast, I'll be bound."

The face disappeared.

"Why won't you speak to me. Are you angry at me for calling you Jemima? Tell me your real name.

Angelina, Evelina, what is it? You can't think how I love you."

Cooper paused, but no answer came, and he went on—

"You might speak to a fellow when he has taken all this trouble to come and see you."

This time we heard a suppressed giggle, and a hand appeared at the window, waving what looked like a handkerchief, though I am not sure that it was not a towel.

"Oh! my beloved one, I knew you would not leave me to languish in despair," quoth Cooper. "Speak but one word, and assure me that the flame of love does not consume my heart in vain."

Another giggle, and some desperate signals were made by the handkerchief or towel.

"She wants us to come nearer," said Cooper, emerging from the laurel bush, and pulling me after him. "Oh, what a lark!"

We came close to the house, and Cooper was looking up to make another of his amatory addresses, when splash! a large jug of cold water was poured down upon us, hitting him full in the face, and thoroughly sousing me as well. Then there was a peal of laughter, and the window shut with a bang.

Cooper was almost knocked down; but he recovered himself with an oath, and for a moment we stood looking at each other in the most sheepish way. Then I turned and took to my heels, and he followed me.

And when we got out upon the road, the moonlight was falling upon a large brass plate fixed to the gate of the *next* house, and we read thereon :

“MISS WILBRAHAM'S ESTABLISHMENT  
FOR YOUNG LADIES.”

“What an ass I am!” exclaimed Cooper. “We have been at the wrong house.”

“Why, I believe now, this is the Greys’ house,” I said.

“Yes, and that young brute Grey Primus has been playing off some of his tricks upon me. See if I don’t pay him out for it, one of these days. I hope he didn’t recognise me. I say, Smith, don’t you let out a word about this, now, or we shall get awfully laughed at.”

“I shan’t say a word. But don’t you think we should go back, Cooper. My shirt is quite wet, and I feel dreadfully cold.”

“Very well. We’ll come out some other night, and rouse up Sargent. Perhaps we had better go back now.”

So back we went, feeling thoroughly disgusted with the ludicrous end of our adventure. But our misfortunes were not over. When we got into Dr Pearson’s garden, we heard footsteps approaching, and made haste to conceal ourselves among some gooseberry bushes. Lying there, we soon perceived, from the sound of their voices, that Mr Vialls and Mr Dalton were walking up and down in the garden, and we durst not move, for fear of attracting their attention.

A bitter east wind was blowing, and, wet as we were, it cut through us like a knife. I began to shiver, and my teeth chattered. It was an agreeable prospect to have to lie here till the masters had finished their promenade. I don't know what Cooper thought of it; but I promised myself that it would be a long while before he or any one else persuaded me to go out at night again.

Presently I felt an inclination to sneeze, and at that moment Mr Dalton and Mr Vialls came upon the gravel walk close beside us. What was I to do?

"I'm going to sneeze," I whispered to Cooper.

"Goodness gracious, don't!"

"I must. I can't keep it in!"

"If you do, you little fool, I'll give you such a licking. Stuff your handkerchief over—hush!"

Cooper pulled out his own handkerchief, and pressed it over my face, almost suffocating me. I struggled and choked, but he held me tight, and luckily the masters turned away just in time, and disappeared into the house, and I was able to have it out in safety. I don't believe I could have held out two seconds more.

Now that the coast was clear, we made haste to get into the house, and I got back to my dormitory without being seen or heard by any one. But I found one or two fellows still awake, and they began to ask awkward questions.

"Hallo, Smith!" exclaimed Lessing, who, with his knees cocked up to his chin, was gazing reflectively on the moon. "*Quod fuisti tu usque ad*—what have you been up to?"



"I have been somewhere," said I. "'Tisn't any business of yours."

"You had better not say that to Vials when he asks you," said Abbing.

"Why! Has he been looking for me?"

"Came and asked for you half-an-hour ago, and when he saw you weren't in bed, he said he would teach you a lesson that you would never forget all your life. My eye, you *will* catch it!"

"Shall I?" said I, trying to speak indifferently, but really feeling in a great funk.

"You'll see to-morrow morning."

"Shut up that row," muttered George Kennedy, sleepily, turning in his bed.

No more was said, and I threw off my clothes, and got into bed, feeling rather unhappy. I had made a pretty mess of it that day,—quarrelled with George Kennedy, got into bad company, allowed myself to be made a fool of, and now to-morrow something dreadful was to happen me, for how could I explain my absence from the dormitory to Mr Vials.

When I fell asleep, I dreamed that I was accused of stealing a bottle of brandy, and after being thrashed by Mr Vials with a poker, was sent home to my father, who wouldn't take me in, so Cooper and I were obliged to become chimney sweeps, and were put in prison by our master for sneezing while in the chimney of a girls' boarding school; all of which horrors had no doubt some connection with Cooper's pork pie.

But next morning I was greatly relieved to find that Abbing had been cramming me when he said Mr Vialls had found out that I was not in bed, and the only evil consequence of my nocturnal expedition was a bad cold in the head, which I had for some days ; and no wonder !





## CHAPTER XV.

### THE BRIGANDS.

**N**EXT day, Phillips and I were playing at prisoners base, and had turned aside and sat down on a bench for two minutes to rest ourselves, when up came Abbing, Sargent, and two or three more of the worst fellows in the school, and laid hands on us in a most unceremonious fashion.

“Shut up! We are not playing just now.”

“That’s why we want you to come along with us, my little dears.”

“What do you want to do with us?”

“You’ll see; come along;” and in spite of our struggles, they began to drag us off.

“I say, you leave these fellows alone,” said Harry Kennedy, coming up at that moment. “They are playing in our game.”

“You mind your own business, Kangaroo, or we’ll take you too.”

“Fetch them along,” shouted Abbing, and we were

forthwith hauled across the playground into a little dark passage, which has before been mentioned as leading into Mr Williamson's class-room.

Here we found Cooper engaged in tormenting two small boys, and began to have an idea of the purpose for which we had been made captive.

"Two more prisoners! Hurrah!" he cried. "That's the right style. These blubbering little brutes here are no use. Give them three kicks a-piece and let them go."

"You've no business to take us away from our game. What do you want to do to us?"

"Oh! we are a band of brigands, and this is our den," explained Abbing. "You aren't to get away till you pay a ransom; so fork out something as quick as you like."

"It's all right," said Cooper. "You'll join our band, won't you, Smith? and we won't do anything to you. Let him go, Abbing."

"I'll give it you afterwards, Abbing," said I in his ear; but at present Abbing was very bold.

"But we must get something out of Jemima, or we'll roast and eat you, Jemima, you know."

"I've nothing to give you."

"Oh, haven't you?" said Cooper, feeling his pockets.

"I say, Cooper, shut up. Let me go, will you, please?"

"Ah, ha! wait a minute, young man."

"Will you promise to give us some apples, Jemima?"

"Yes, I will—on Saturday."

"And Smith ought to pay something if he is to be allowed to join us," said Abbing.

"I won't give you anything. Let us go back to our game, Cooper."

"Oh, no! Stop with us, and we'll show you some rare fun. Why, this fellow hasn't got anything in his pockets. Hallo! here's something, though. Catch hold, Sargent!" and he drew a letter from the pocket of Phillips' jacket.

"Oh, my!" cried Sargent, opening it. "A letter from his mammy. Let's read it!"

"Give it me!" exclaimed Phillips, turning red, and trying to escape from Cooper's grasp.

"Wouldn't you like it? Oh, here's fun! 'My dear Evvy'—I say, Phillips, why doesn't she call you 'Dear Jemima'?"

"You beastly cads!" blubbered Phillips, in a tremendous passion.

"What cheek! I say, we must put him to the torture."

"Yes, I'll teach him to call us beastly cads," said Cooper, brandishing a strap. "Catch hold of him, Abbing."

"No, you hold him, and I'll lick him," suggested Abbing, producing a knotted handkerchief.

"You may lick me till you kill me," cried Phillips, "and I'll still say that you are beastly bullies."

"Take that to begin with, then," said Cooper, giving him a blow with the strap, doubled up and knotted.

Phillips rose to the occasion. He stopped crying, bit his lips, and looked Cooper full in the face. As for

me, I had witnessed this scene with the utmost disgust, though I had not the courage to protest against Cooper's enlisting me in his band of blackguards. But now, when I saw him begin to thrash Phillips, I felt inclined—I don't know what I should have done, for just then there was a great commotion outside, which interrupted the proceedings of these amiable gentlemen.

"Don't let any one in," shouted Cooper, and Sargent sprang to the door just in time to secure it.

"Who's there?"

"Open the door," was the reply, in the voice of George Kennedy.

"What do you want?"

"You have got Smith and Phillips in there, and we want them. They are playing in our game," and the besiegers commenced banging on the door, and using all their efforts to push it open.

"They're not here," bellowed Sargent.

"Don't believe him!" cried I, at the pitch of my voice.

"You little fool, I'll half-kill you directly," growled Sargent; but as it was all he and the rest of them could do to keep the door shut, he was not able to carry out his threat.

"Oh, I say, Smith, I didn't think you were a traitor," said Cooper. "Come and put your back against the door."

"I shan't," said I.

And now the besiegers, finding force of no avail, had recourse to stratagem. They suddenly became very

quiet, and then we heard somebody saying through the keyhole :

"I say!"

"Well, say away."

"Let me in, will you? I want to fetch a book out of Williamson's class-room."

"Do you? Then you'll have to want it. We are doing our lessons here, and we don't want to be interrupted."

There was silence for another minute, and then the voice said :

"Look out, you fellows, here's Williamson coming."

"Very like a whale!"

"Oh, yes, Lessing!" said Cooper, "you are a very clever fellow, but you don't come over me, my boy."

Another pause, and then a voice which made Abbing start—

"Open the door instantly! What is the meaning of this?"

"That is Williamson," said Abbing, in alarm. "Open the door, Cooper."

"Stuff!" said Cooper. "It's only Lessing imitating Williamson's voice."

"Will you open the door at once! It is me—Mr Williamson!"

"Oh, yes! Shut up, you old fool," answered Cooper. "Do you think I don't know your voice well enough?"

A smothered laugh was heard outside, which confirmed Cooper's opinion that a trick was being played on them.

"Are you going to let me into my class-room," said Mr Williamson, getting a little angry.

"Would you like to come in now, or will you wait till we let you?"

Another laugh.

"Come, now, no more of this folly!"

"Oh, dear, no; certainly not."

"Look here, you confounded donkey," said Sargent, "if you don't shut up your nonsense, I'll pay you out presently."

This time there was no answer; but in a minute a tremendous attack was made upon the door, and in spite of all the bullies' efforts, it was pushed open, and the handle of a racket bat was inserted, so as to prevent it from being shut again. One or two hands were also thrust through the opening, and Sargent struck one of them sharply over the knuckles with the buckle end of a strap, upon which it was quickly withdrawn with an exclamation of pain.

"What *have* you done!" exclaimed Abbing, "drawing back. "That wasn't a boy's hand; it had a ring on it. I say, we had better open the door."

The rest of the defenders were alarmed, and began to cease their resistance; and another vigorous assault being made at that moment, the door was burst open, sending Sargent sprawling on his back, and in rushed a great crowd of boys with Mr Williamson at their head, at the sight of whom Messrs Cooper, Abbing, and Co. looked uncommonly blank.



"What do you mean by keeping me out of my class-room?" said Mr Williamson, wrathfully. "Who was the boy that dared to strike me?"

"Please, sir," said Sargent, picking himself up and taking courage, "we didn't know it was you. We thought that some of the fellows were trying to humbug us."

"Yes, sir," protested Abbing, "we really did, sir. I am sure we beg your pardon, sir."

By this time the evident discomfiture of the whole crew, and the ludicrous figure presented by Sargent as he rose from the floor covered by dust, were too much for the boys' gravity, and there was a general titter, in which Mr Williamson could scarcely resist joining.

"Well, perhaps it was a mistake," said he, feeling that he could not be angry. "But you mustn't shut the door against people imitating my voice in future. And don't let me find you here again in play-time. Why," he continued, turning on me, "I wonder that you don't go out, and run about this fine morning, instead of moping away here. Get along with you, every one," and Mr Williamson went his way into his class-room.

Phillips and I took the opportunity to make our escape; and after a few angry words between Sargent and George Kennedy, the rest of the boys followed us, and we resumed our game.

It behoves me to relate briefly the end of the brigands. Cooper and Sargent were big hulking fellows, and no one had been present at this scene who was able

to call them to account for interfering with us. But these young men, perceiving how nearly the peculiar nature of their amusement had been discovered by a master, came to the conclusion that their dignity and safety required them to take care what they were about. So for the present they resigned all connection with this band of bullies, or brigands, as they called themselves.

But Master Abbing, having tasted the sweets of tormenting, was by no means disposed to give up that luxury so soon, and resolved to go into the brigand business for himself, with the assistance of one or two congenial spirits.

Now it will be understood that our friend Abbing was not a very valiant warrior, and his powerful allies having seceded, he was obliged to confine his attacks to very small and peaceable boys who stood in awe even of him, and whom he could bully into giving him apples or sweets, and promising not to tell any one. But next day, emboldened by success, he undertook to assail Ben Cane, who was big and heavy enough to make two of Abbing, but who looked so good-natured that you couldn't have supposed him capable of coming to blows with a kitten.

Abbing and his myrmidons came up to Ben, or Balbus, as the boys had already begun to call him, while he was sharpening a knife—he spent most of his spare time in sharpening knives—and requested the pleasure of his company in their “den.”

"Leave me alone, please," said Balbus, very meekly. "I want to sharpen my knife."

"You are going to give me that knife as a present," quoth Abbing, trying to snatch it away from him ; and failing in this, he laid hold of Balbus by the collar, and proceeded to drag him along.

"Let go, please, Abbing," remarked Balbus. "I don't wish to come with you."

"But we wish you to come with us," and the whole crew laid hold of him and pulled him away.

Balbus quietly shook them off, saying—

"I wish you wouldn't bother me."

"Just come quietly now, or we'll thrash you," said Abbing brandishing an instrument of torture, composed of a twisted strap.

"I say, don't."

Abbing cut him over the legs, and then suddenly Balbus stepped forward and deliberately smote Abbing on the nose, and afterwards boxed his ears very soundly.

This unexpected demonstration quite took Abbing by surprise ; and he so far forgot his character as a ferocious leader of brigands, that he began to weep bitterly, his tears mingling with the blood that was running from his nose.

"I wish you would leave me alone," said Balbus as meekly as before. "Why don't you leave fellows alone, Abbing?"

"You are a big bully," blubbered Abbing. "Great idiots like you are always strong."

"Well, you wouldn't leave me alone," murmured Balbus in a tone of complaint, and walked off very quietly.

The result of this little affair was that Abbing perceived his inability to carry on the business of wholesale bullying by himself, and the band of brigands was broken up, after having, I believe, a great quarrel over the division of some nuts which they bullied out of a little boy. It was just as well for them that their proceedings didn't come to the ears of Henderson. He would have made short work of Abbing, and Cooper into the bargain.

Poor Abbing! With all the care that he took of his precious self, he was always coming to grief.





## CHAPTER XVI.

### COOPER'S JACKAL.

**A**FTER this, I felt inclined to fight shy of Mr Cooper, but I found it by no means easy to shake off the sudden friendship which we had formed. For two or three days after our nocturnal expedition, he was always watching for me, and dragging me off to walk with him, or to sit in his study. And though at first I was flattered by being his companion, I soon found out that it was nothing to be proud of. Boys of his own age didn't care about having much to do with him, and he was always forming a violent attachment to one of the younger fellows, with whom he generally quarrelled, after doing his best to teach him a great deal of evil; and then took up with a new favourite.

Cooper's notions of friendship were rather peculiar. His "jackal," as he was pleased to call me, was expected to make himself generally useful. He would wait for me after school and give me his books to carry home;

then he would drag me off to the cricket-field and make me bowl or long stop for him for a couple of hours, occasionally varying the amusement by bowling at my legs, which he told me was capital fun. Then, in the evenings, he used to get me into his study and make me look up words in the dictionary for him, whereas I thought it much more according to the fitness of things, that he should help *me* with my lessons. And he made me come to him after bed time, at the risk of being found out and punished by Mr Vialls, and I had to read a novel to him till he began to feel sleepy, and was graciously pleased to dismiss me. This was a sort of friendship that I didn't at all admire, even if I had not been thoroughly disgusted with the fellow as soon as I came to know him; but I hadn't the courage to break with him openly, and could only try to keep out of his way as much as possible.

One night he got me into his study after preparation, and told me that he wished me to do him a great favour.

"What is it?" asked I, rather doubtfully, for by this time I understood him.

"Look here, Smith," he said, putting a Horace and a sheet of paper before me, "you are a jolly little chap, and you write a nice hand. Just do me a hundred lines, will you, there's a good fellow."

"Oh! I say, this is too bad, Cooper! I don't see why I am to do your impositions."

"What a selfish fellow you are! It won't take you half-an-hour."

"I promised to play chess with Phillips."

"Never mind Phillips. I think you might oblige me for this once. Now, don't be an ungrateful Jackal. You know, you ought to write all my impositions."

"I don't see that," said I sulkily; but I sat down and began to scribble the lines, while Cooper very coolly lay on his bed and amused himself by reading a novel. I had not finished the lines when the bell rang for prayers, but Cooper said it didn't matter, as I could do the rest in preparation next morning.

"Indeed I shan't," said I, crossly. "I've got my own lessons to do."

"But you will, Mr Jackal. If you don't, you'll see what I shall say to you. And if you haven't finished your lessons, bring them up to my study, and I'll help you with them."

I was very angry with Cooper, and made up my mind that he shouldn't get me to do another imposition for him. But I did finish this one next morning at the time when I ought to have been preparing my own lessons; and in consequence found that I had scarcely time left to write my exercise—a translation of some dozen lines of Virgil. So I asked Cooper to help me, and he gave me a crib to Virgil, from which he advised me to copy out my translation without further trouble.

Cribbing was not common at Whitminster school, and I had never resorted to it before. But now, with the fear of being punished for not bringing my exercise before me, I put away all scruples and copied the trans-

lation straight out of the crib without looking at anything further than the first line of the Latin ; which was very foolish on my part, to say the least of it.

So I began to think, after I had given in the exercise, and remembered how sharp Mr Williamson was about finding out these tricks. But it was too late to repent then, and I could only hope that my dishonesty might not be discovered.

“Old Paddy,” as we called our master, was rather snappish that morning. The day before, we had given up some English essays, which he pronounced to be so “disgustingly shameful” that he could not go on with looking them over. This morning he set us to do some dictation, and threatened any boy who had more than ten mistakes with the cane.

Mr Abbing was equally averse to the trouble of learning spelling and to the inconvenience of having the cane ; but on this occasion he had hit upon a plan which he thought would enable him to avoid both. This plan was to copy all the words from the paper of Lessing, who sat next him. Lessing, otherwise known amongst us as the “Monkey,” was a very good-humoured fellow, and Abbing supposed that he would make no objection. Neither he did ; but seeing what his neighbour was about, he took some pains to spell nearly every word on his paper wrong ; and as Abbing faithfully copied him, they both proved to have seventeen mistakes at the end of the lesson. So Mr Williamson took out his cane, and called them both up.



But before proceeding to execution he examined their papers. He was not so much astonished at Abbing, but such a failure on Lessing's part was unusual. On looking over the two papers, he found that they contained exactly the same mistakes—some of them most extraordinary ones—such as *katasstrophy*, *manewver*, and *hipopotomos*.

"What *have* you been about, Lessing?" he said, looking puzzled. "You must have been making mistakes on purpose. Do you want to be caned?"

"If you please, sir," said Lessing, casting his eyes on the ground with a look of demure gravity, which was irresistibly ludicrous. Abbing didn't seem to think there was anything to laugh at, though he saw how he had been taken in, and was evidently in a great fright. Mr Williamson looked from one culprit to the other, and compared their papers; and suddenly a light dawned upon him.

"Why did you do this?"

"For fun, sir."

"Oh, I see!" said Mr Williamson, scarcely able to keep from smiling. "Well, Lessing, come along."

Lessing took his caning in the coolest way, and then looked at Abbing with a quiet twinkle in his eye, which set us off into a roar. Abbing, as usual, began to snivel and make excuses, but Mr Williamson cut him short, and gave him a very satisfactory thrashing, to the great delight of all the form, who voted that it served him right.

"I hate these dishonest ways of yours," said Mr

Williamson, energetically. "Boys, you may be careless and thoughtless a hundred times over, and I won't think much the worse of you, though I have to punish you ever so often. But I do hate anything unfair; and it is most abominable to see a boy trying to gain places and escape punishment by these sneaking tricks. Go to your seat, sir, and feel thoroughly ashamed of yourself."

Abbing shrunk off blubbing, and Mr Williamson turned to Lessing.

"I suppose, Lessing, you made mistakes on purpose that Abbing might copy them?"

"I didn't copy them from Abbing, sir."

"No—I hope no one here would ever require to copy from Abbing. Well, of course, you bargained for a caning, and you have got it. But, don't you think, Lessing—

Here Lessing assumed such a look of penitence and humility, that Mr Williamson could not keep his countenance, and sent him to his seat without finishing the reproof which he was not sure whether he ought not to give this droll boy.

This little episode was very amusing to the rest, but it made me rather uneasy. What would Mr Williamson say if he knew how I had done my translation. Certainly he would call it "a dishonest way of gaining places and escaping punishment," and I should probably come in for something worse than Abbing. All the morning I sat on thorns, and my heart beat fast when at length I saw Mr Williamson take up our exercises, which

were lying on his desk, and look rapidly through them. What was my dismay to see that he picked one out from the rest, and began examining it attentively with a frown on his face! It was written on blue paper, and so was mine. I was caught!

"Listen to me, boys," said Mr Williamson, standing up in his desk. "I wish to read you a piece of one of these exercises, which seems to be quite a model of elegance and accuracy. I should like to know the author of this talented composition. His modesty is so great that he has omitted, or perhaps forgotten, to put his name to it. *I, indeed, was consoling myself with this promise under Troy's sad catastrophe, balancing more prosperous fates against misfortunes. But now the same hard fortune still pursues them, after they have been tossed and troubled by such a variety of afflictions, and so forth. Stand up, the boy who wrote this exercise.*"

In great perturbation, I stood up, and confessed that it was mine.

"Oh!" said Mr Williamson. "Will you be so kind as to come here, Smith, and bring your Virgil with you. Now, will you tell us which word it is that you translate by 'consoling?' What! you don't know? Will you please translate *repensans* or *casibus*? Come along! Dear me! It is most extraordinary that a boy who can write such a fine translation doesn't know the meaning of one word of the Latin. I suppose, Smith, your memory is defective, though your organ of language is large. This is really a very good translation—rather

too good, indeed—it is a pity that you can't do it *viva voce* when you are called upon, because then, you know, there could be no suspicion that you had copied it somewhere."

Most of us would rather have had a dozen canings than stand the fire of Mr Williamson's tongue when he was in a sarcastic mood. I stood before him overwhelmed with shame and confusion, while he badgered me in this style like a cat playing with a mouse.

"How did you get this translation?" he asked at length, when he thought I had stood in the pillory long enough.

"I copied it out of a book, sir," I said, in a low voice.

"You copied it out of a book!" he repeated in a tone of the utmost scorn. "And this is the way that you abuse my trust in your honesty, and try to gain an unfair advantage over your companions? Boys, I am thoroughly disgusted by what I have seen this morning. I used to think that whatever your other faults were, there was a tone of honour and right feeling in this form; but now I begin to lose all confidence in you. If nothing else will do, however, I shall be compelled to inflict the most severe punishments upon the slightest approach to dishonesty."

Here Mr Williamson's hand went to the lid of his desk, and I began to summon up courage for the caning which I had no doubt I was going to get, when a diversion was made in my favour.

Some boy wishing to play a trick on that good-

natured, stupid old Ben Cane, had passed him a bottle of strong smelling salts and told him to smell it. He was just going to do so when Mr Williamson's sharp eyes observed him, and he was ordered to bring the bottle to the master's desk.

"What is this?" he asked, taking the bottle and handling it suspiciously.

"Please sir, I don't know."

"Where did you get it?"

"Please, sir, I would rather not say," said old Balbus, who was a good fellow, and didn't want to get the other boy into a scrape.

Mr Williamson didn't ask any more questions, but put the bottle to his nose. The effect was instantaneous. He jumped up, letting the bottle drop as if it had been a hot poker, and began to sneeze most vigorously before he had time to tug out his pocket-handkerchief. When the boys saw their master's red face and streaming eyes, they could scarcely restrain a titter, which Mr Williamson tried to repress, but his rebuke was stopped by a fresh fit of sneezing, and several fellows fairly burst out laughing. At length he recovered, and sternly commanded silence.

"Please, sir, I didn't mean"—began poor Cane, who had been standing by with a look of horror and amazement on his usually placid countenance.

"Go to your seat," said Mr Williamson, gruffly. He was evidently in a great rage, and was making an effort to subdue it. This saved my skin for the present. He

often enough got into a passion, but he knew when he was in one, which is more than all schoolmasters do, and would not trust himself to thrash a boy till he had cooled down. So, he now sent me also to my seat, and told me to speak to him after school.

I fully expected a very severe punishment, but when I explained to Mr Williamson that I had only copied my translation because I was pressed for time, and did not remember that I was trying to get an unfair advantage over my companions, he let me off with a lecture and a couple of hours' detention, and I promised, very sincerely, "not to do it again."

I was nearly getting into a worse scrape with the boys, though I don't think they would have been very virtuously indignant if my offence had only been attempting to deceive our master, but they fully perceived the wickedness of my dishonesty towards them. I was informed, in very plain language, that I had better not try cribbing again, and some of them were disposed to receive favourably a suggestion of that cheeky little Wood, that I ought to be kicked round the playground. I advised him to try it, but he seemed not inclined to take a prominent share in the carrying out of his proposal. George Kennedy took my part, however, or I might have become the subject of a very unmistakable manifestation of public feeling, for I was still no great favourite.

I was rather astonished that Kennedy stood up for me. There had been a coolness between us for the last

few days, ever since the beginning of my friendship with Cooper ; but now he seemed inclined to make it up.

"You know I advised you to have nothing to do with Cooper," he said. "He'll get you into some far worse scrape with his cribs and his suppers, and all the rest of it ; and then he'll turn you off when he is tired of you, and pick up with a new favourite. I know Master Cooper a great deal better than you do. He's the biggest cad in the school."

"I'm sure I don't want to have anything to do with him," said I. "I can't bear him, but he won't leave me alone."

"Tell him he is a cad, and you don't want to know him."

"I don't like to."

"Why not ? I'd tell him so in a minute, if I get the chance. If he ever comes to fetch you out of my study, you shall see what I say to him. Why do you never come to my study now?"

"I thought you wished to cut me, Kennedy."

"Cut you ! Stuff and nonsense ! It's you who have been trying to cut me, because I am not such a respectable character as your friend Cooper. Come in this evening after prep."

"All right," said I ; and in this way our reconciliation was effected.

That evening we were in our dormitory preparing to go to bed, and watching some of Lessing's antics. Lessing had been moved into our dormitory this half,

and gave us great fun. He was the queerest and the coolest old fellow. He used to amuse us by standing on his head, tying his long limbs in a knot, making his shoulder-bones squeak, and such like devices. He seemed not to mind a bit what he did to himself. He would often run a pin up to the head into his arm or leg, without wincing ; and this evening he was offering to allow Abbing to perform this operation on him, by way of making amends for the caning he had been the means of procuring for our sly friend. That's not the point, however. What I intended to say was, that as we were standing about, half undressed, Cooper appeared at the door of our dormitory and beckoned to me.

"I want to speak to you, Smith."

"What do you want?"

"Come to my study, I've something to show you."

"No. I want to go to bed. I'm sleepy."

"Don't be an obstinate jackal. Come along."

"I'd rather not. I don't wish to go to your study," said I, looking at Kennedy, who made haste to take up the cudgels in my behalf.

"Why are you bothering him, Cooper? You'll get him into a row with Vials, if he's found out of his dormitory. You are a prefect, and you oughtn't to get fellows into a scrape."

"Oh yes! As if you never broke rules, Kennedy."

"Well, you leave Smith alone, and get out of our dormitory, will you! He doesn't want to have anything to do with you."



"Can't you mind your own business?" said Cooper, making a stride forwards; and I thought he was going to strike Kennedy, who jumped back, and took shelter behind a bed.

"Get out, or we'll all set on you," he cried. "Shy your slippers at him, you fellows."

"Just let any of you try it," growled Cooper, looking round; but the Kangaroo, undaunted, jumped up on a bed, and hit him over the head with a pillow.

"Little brute," cried Cooper, turning wrathfully round upon Harry, who thrust the pillow in his face, and then slipped off like an eel; and before Cooper could follow him, George Kennedy had sprung up to the rescue, and he and Lessing and two or three others threw themselves upon Cooper, and pulled him to the floor.

"Let me go, you fools, or I'll murder some of you," roared Cooper, struggling to get up.

"Well, will you leave our dormitory? Let him get up. We can easily manage him among us."

"I'll pay out some of you sweetly for this, to-morrow," said Cooper, getting up in a furious rage.

"Do, if you can. I tell you what, Cooper; if you touch one fellow here I'll tell Henderson, and he'll give you such a licking. I should think you haven't forgotten the last one you had from him. Or I believe I could fight you myself, though you are such a big, fat beast. Get out of this."

Assailed by such winged words, and by a fire of slippers and pieces of soap, Cooper hastened to make a

retreat, uttering dreadful threats of vengeance, which, however, he did not try to fulfil. He never showed himself in our dormitory again.

Next morning I took good care to keep clear of him. But in the playground that afternoon I found myself close beside him, and all the notice he took of me was a contemptuous sneer, and the remark :

“Little cad !”

I was walking with Harry Kennedy at the time, and just behind us was Henderson Primus, the head and cock of the school, and the terror of all bullies, so I took courage and rejoined :

“Big cad !”


And that was the end of my friendship with Cooper. Afterwards he seemed to hate me as violently as he had before pretended to like me, and I was afraid he would try to play me some nasty trick. He daren't bully me openly, but as a prefect he had the power of reporting me for punishment for certain offences, and I thought he was looking out for a chance of doing so, justly or unjustly. But he couldn't catch me tripping, and for some time he showed his spite only by giving me a scornful kick occasionally as I passed him.





## CHAPTER XVII.

### REPORTED.

 ONE day Mr Vialls sent for Harry Kennedy and me to his room in the schoolhouse, "the chamber of horrors," as we called it. We had been doing our work very fairly for some time, and were not conscious of any offence against rules, but we were rather alarmed to find a cane lying on the table and Mr Vialls standing at the fire place with his hands under his coat tails, which was his common attitude when he wanted to look judicial.

"Shut the door," he said. "Kennedy, were you out of bounds yesterday?"

"No, sir."

"Smith, were you?"

I did not answer for a moment. The fact was, that we were not very particular about keeping within bounds, and I could not remember whether I had been or not on the day before. Mr Vialls saw my hesitation, and increased it by fixing his eye upon me very sternly.

"Answer me at once. Were you out of bounds yesterday?"

"I am not sure, sir," I stammered out.

"Ah! we know what that means. Now, Kennedy, do you persist in your denial?"

"Yes, sir, Smith and I went down town yesterday as far as Humphrey Street, but that is in bounds."

"Cooper has reported you both. He says he saw you on the river bank."

Kennedy and I looked at each other. It was the prefects' duty to report any boy that they might find out of bounds; but, as a rule, they did not do so. It was an understood thing that they took care not to see any fellow out of bounds if they could help it. But when we heard Cooper's name mentioned, we understood how it was. Mr Vialls noticed the glance that passed between us, and misinterpreted it.

"You need not try to get out of it. I see plainly that—"

"I'm sure I wasn't, sir," said Kennedy, indignantly.

"Silence! Don't add to your fault by another lie," said Mr Vialls, with his blackest frown. "Smith, you will have two hours detention for breaking rules, and be thankful that I take no notice of the way that you would have equivocated if you had dared. You may go now. Kennedy, I must punish you more severely. You have told me a downright, impudent lie, and have taken away the good opinion I always had of you. I never thought you were a coward and a liar. Stand here."

I went out and stood in the passage, waiting for Kennedy, in a furious state of mind. As I heard the blows of the cane, I almost made up my mind to rush back into the room and ask Mr Vialls to let me have half of his unjust punishment. I even felt bold enough to denounce the master to his face as a cruel tyrant. I was ready to cry for rage. But while I was standing angry and irresolute, Mr Vialls stopped caning Kennedy, and I heard his loud, harsh voice delivering a lecture, which seemed as if it were going to last for ever.

At length the door opened, and Kennedy came out with quivering lips and his eyes full of tears. I seized his arm, and exclaimed :

"It's a shame!"

"Hush, Bob! He'll hear you."

"I don't care if he does. He's a brute and a bully! and as for that Cooper!" I cried, stamping with my foot—

"Not so much noise, there, please," cried Mr Vialls, from within his room.

I shook my fist at the door, and we went into the dining-hall, which was empty at that time. Then Kennedy sat down on a form and sobbed outright.

"He said I was a liar, Bob! I'm sure he never knew me tell him a lie."

"Never mind, Harry! Who cares for what he says?—Ass! Did he hurt you much?"

"I didn't seem to feel it, I was so angry; but I believe he has broken the skin," said the poor Kangaroo, wiping away his tears.

"It's all a lie, made up by that fellow Cooper. I should speak to Mr Williamson about it. He'll believe your word, if Vialls won't."

"Let's go and speak to Cooper. He's very likely in his study. Oh Bob! I wish I was big enough to fight him."

But as we were going to Cooper's study we met him on the stairs, and I furiously demanded why he had reported us.

"I thought I saw you on the river bank."

"You didn't think anything of the kind; you have been telling a regular lie, you spiteful brute!"

"Shut up, young Smith, or I'll lick you. But I say, Kennedy, I am sorry you have got caned. I thought Vialls would only give you an hour's detention."

"Oh yes! you are sorry, are you? Why did you go and tell lies about us, then?"

To do Cooper justice, I believe he was sorry things had gone so far.

"Perhaps I made a mistake," he said. "I didn't think you would be caned. Never mind, Kennedy, it's all over now! Come to my study you two fellows, and I'll give you some apples."

"I won't come to your study, and I won't speak to you again," said Kennedy.

"Nor will I—and I should lick you, if I could," declared I. "Come along, Harry. Don't let us stand speaking to this cad. We'll go and look for your brother."

So we went off to the cricket-field, where we found the greater part of the boarders, and told them our wrongs. They were all very indignant, and oh! you should have seen the wrath of George Kennedy, when he heard what had happened to his brother. He raged and fumed and threatened, and I believe if Mr. Vials or Cooper had chanced to come on the spot at that moment he would have flown at either or both of them. He was scarcely to be prevented from falling upon Tom Cane, who was unlucky enough to suggest that Cooper might not have been telling a falsehood when he said that he saw us out of bounds. Finally, he went off to look for Cooper, and almost all the boys followed, expecting to have a great scene.

But when we got to the schoolhouse we found that Cooper had locked himself into his study, and very wisely declined the interview which Kennedy was so anxious for. After battering at his door for half-an-hour we gave it up, and as nearly all the boarders were by this time assembled, we went down stairs and held an indignation meeting.

Cooper's character was so well known that our version of the story was readily believed, and everybody sympathised with us. The other prefects were especially indignant, and if Cooper had only shown himself, he would have certainly been treated to a summary process of Lynch law. But he pretended to have a headache, and stayed in his study till the bell rang for prayers. By this time the excitement had subsided, and Harry

Kennedy, like a good fellow that he was, himself asked that Cooper might not be set upon ; a request which his brother was very loath to comply with. It was resolved that every one should cut him, and Henderson and Charteris, two of the prefects, undertook to speak to Mr Vialls next day, though I, not to be outdone in magnanimity, professed myself willing to suffer my punishment and say nothing more about it. But Cooper had more than once been known to use his power as a prefect unjustly, and all the boys were resolved to stand it no longer.

Something turned up which smoothed our way to making a complaint. That afternoon Mrs Chesman, the old lady whom I mentioned before, had found Cooper and Abbing smoking, and she not only gave them a good lecture, but sent a note to Mrs Pearson, informing her of it. The consequence was, that next morning these two nice young men had an interview with Mr Vialls. Abbing was well caned, and Cooper was deprived of his prefectship.

The masters had always trusted Cooper, who was a plausible, cunning kind of fellow, and Mr Vialls was very much disgusted to find that he had been mistaken in him, and still more when Henderson told him that all the boys thought we had been unjustly punished. But under the circumstances, he could not refuse to look into the matter, and was obliged to admit that we had been ill used. Cooper wouldn't confess that he had told a lie, but he shuffled and prevaricated so, that Mr Vialls no



longer believed him, and was very angry. Cooper was sent to Dr Pearson, and got well pitched into—the story was—by Mrs Pearson, who took up our cause very warmly. He was punished by a very long imposition, and being confined to his study out of school hours for a month. Besides, he was cut by almost all the boys, who rather wondered that he hadn't been expelled.

Mr Vialls seemed very sorry, and rather ashamed at the way he had behaved to us. He sent for us, and made a sort of apology, admitting that he had been rather hasty. Of course, he let me off my detention. He could not take away the blue marks that were on the poor Kangaroo's shoulders, but by way of making up for the caning, he offered him five shillings, which Kennedy wouldn't take. I thought he was quite right.

"There's no use making a fuss about it now," he said, as we came out of Mr Vialls' room, "only perhaps he will believe my word next time."

And thus ended my dealings with my friend Cooper.





## CHAPTER XVIII.

### A TRIAL.

**T**WO or three days afterwards there was a "row" in the school. Our good friend Mrs Chesman came one day to complain that several cucumber frames in her garden had been broken through the night. One of her servants had heard the smashing, and had run to the window just in time to see, jumping from the wall, a boy who wore a college cap, and was therefore known to be one of our fellows.

Mrs Chesman always took a great interest in the school, and had shown kindness to many of us ; so she had some reason to be indignant at this piece of malicious mischief.

Mr Dalton was much displeased also, and when we met together for prayers in the large schoolroom gave us a lecture about it, and called upon the culprit to stand up. Not a boy moved.

"I will give him one more chance of escaping the very severest punishment. Let him stand up and

remove this stigma from his companions. The school is disgraced so long as we are all suspected of doing such a thing."

Still no one seemed inclined to confess, and after a pause, Mr Dalton said—

"Well, boys, you were to have had a holiday this afternoon. It will now be taken away unless the name of this boy is given me. And if he still continues obstinate, I shall take some other means of punishing you."

It may be imagined that we were very much enraged against this evil-doer, when we found ourselves deprived of a holiday, and had besides the prospect of losing others if he was mean enough not to come forward. We talked a great deal about the matter among ourselves, and by the time that afternoon school was over, and we were going home, a strong suspicion had spread among us that we had to thank Cooper and Abbing for this public misfortune.

Many of us were ready to believe anything against these two, and it was proposed to give their names up to the masters. But Lessing suggested that the best way would be to try them ourselves first, and this idea was received with favour. Henderson approved of it when it was mentioned to him, and as it seemed likely to be a wet evening, we thought the plan would be capital ; and as soon as we got home to the schoolhouse we set about making arrangements for a grand court of justice.

Henderson was unanimously voted judge, and George Kennedy and Lessing undertook to be counsel for the prosecution. Twelve jurymen were chosen from the oldest of the boys, and made to sit inside a table turned upside down, which was called the jury-box. The judge was elevated on a chair placed on two forms, and was arrayed in an old cap and gown belonging to Dr Pearson, which we persuaded Mrs Bramble to get for us. Lessing, to look more like a barrister, tied a towel round his head, and put on a greatcoat turned inside out. Altogether our proceedings were a curious mixture of seriousness and burlesque.

There was some difficulty in finding any one who would consent to act as counsel for the accused ; but at length Charteris, one of the prefects, second from the head of the school, undertook the task at the request of the judge. Then Ben Cane, with a large red night-cap on his head, and a bell in his hand, was appointed clerk of the court ; and preparations having thus been made, the only thing to be done was to get hold of the prisoners, who were reported to be both in the fives' court. Some half-dozen of the strongest jurymen proceeded thither, and requested their attendance. They professed to be very much astonished and indignant at the charge, and attempted to bolt off to Cooper's study, but were caught and dragged into the court without further ceremony.

By order of the judge, the prisoners were made to stand inside of the fire-guard ; the charge was then ex-

plained to them, and they were called upon to plead "guilty," or "not guilty." Cooper tried to treat the whole affair with sulky indifference, and would not answer; but Abbing, who was evidently in a great fright, pleaded "not guilty" most energetically, and wanted there and then to make a speech, but was stopped by the judge.

"Hold your tongue, prisoner! In due time your counsel will have an opportunity of saying what is to be said in your favour. Now, silence in the court! The junior counsel for the prosecution will read the indictment."

We were all prepared to listen with the greatest attention; but to do the thing properly, the crier of the court rang his bell violently, and exclaimed: "Silence! Oh yes! oh yes! oh yes!" to which a facetious jurymen thought fit to rejoin: "Oh no! oh no! oh no!" and got a punch in the ribs for his pains from Marshall, the foreman of the jury. Then Lessing got up and began to read from a paper on which he had been writing:

"Mi domine et gentlemen of the jury. Videtis ante vos duos pueros, nomine Johannes Cooperus et Tomasus Henricus Abbingus qui sunt accusati habendi noctu et sneakiter et caditer et blackguardissime fractum quosdam cucumberos framos in hortu qui belongat ad—"

"What on earth is all this?" interrupted one of the jury.

"It's Latin, you fool!" replied Lessing. "The indictment must be in Latin."

"Oh, I say, no humbug! Say what you have got to say in English; musn't he, Henderson?"

"Perhaps the court will allow me to make a remark," interposed Charteris. "Far be it from me to doubt that my learned friend's Latin is most Ciceronian and elegant; but I really think the prisoners, and the jury, ought to have a chance of knowing what he is saying."

"Yes; go a-head. No humbug," said the judge.

"May I ask your lordship to take a note of this," said Lessing, very gravely. "If anything goes wrong through the proceedings not being conducted with due formality, it isn't my fault. Well, if you will have it in English, here goes: Mrs Chesman's cucumber frames were broken last night about ten o'clock. Her servant saw a boy in a mortar-board running away from her garden wall a minute after she had heard the glass breaking. I went to the garden to-day and saw the holes. They seem to have been made by a crossbow or a catapult. Abbing has a crossbow, and both he and Cooper have a spite against Mrs Chesman. Both of them are in the habit of going out at night, contrary to the rules of the house, which I need not insult the gentlemen of the jury by reminding them, are never broken by any of us. We are going to prove all this."

"Ah, ha! We'll see about that," said the counsel for the prisoners, dipping a large pen into his inkbottle, and looking sagacious.

"The first witness we are going to call, my lord, is Phillips," said Kennedy.

"Call Phillips," said Henderson, and then everybody called out "Phillips," and laughed, and the crier

of the court had to ring his bell and shout for ever so long before silence could be obtained. The judge threatened to box the ears of the audience if they made any more noise, and then Phillips was hoisted into the witness-box, which was nothing less than an old barrel that had been rolled in from the yard for this purpose.

"Now, you must get a Bible and swear him," said Tom Cane, who was one of the jury.

"No, no ; none of that," said Kennedy, hastily ; and the judge putting a decided veto upon any irreverence, a large Ainsworth's "Dictionary" was procured instead, and the witness was directed to kiss it, and promise that he would tell the truth.

"Phillips, didn't you hear Abbing say——?" began Kennedy.

"Stop, stop !" interrupted the judge. "You musn't ask questions that way. What did you hear Abbing say, Phillips ?"

"He told me that he and Cooper had a crow to pick with Mrs Chesman, and that they would pay her out finely."

"I'm sure that wasn't what I said," cried Abbing.

"Shut up," said Kennedy. "Your counsel will have a chance of asking the witness questions presently. When did you hear Abbing say this ?"

"The day before yesterday."

"Well, that's all I have to ask you."

"No, no, wait a minute," said Lessing. "Do you

know if the prisoners had any reason for feeling a spite against Mrs Chesman? This must be proved, you know."

"Yes. She had told Mr Vialls that she saw them smoking, and he punished them. And she once told on Abbing for making faces in the choir."

"Now, if you are done, it's my turn to cross-examine," said Charteris, rising, and stroking his incipient moustache with an air of reflection. "Are you quite sure that what Abbing said to you was not this—'Mrs Chesman is a most excellent and amiable lady, and I would do anything to gratify her!' Now, you are on your oath, remember. Be careful how you answer."

"I am quite sure he didn't say that."

"What did he say? Come, now, witness, answer straight-forwardly for once."

"He said what I told you before."

"My lord, I hope you are taking a note of this witness' answers, for we intend to prosecute him for perjury. Now, witness, do you think it was a moral and proper thing of Mrs Chesman to report the prisoners to their master?"

"I don't see what that has to do with it," interrupted Kennedy.

"Sir, it is not my business to furnish you with eyes. But am I told that morality has nothing to do with justice! Well, I'll ask you another question? Let me see!—How old are you?"



“Fourteen.”

“Will you have the kindness to tell the gentlemen of the jury how many cow’s tails would reach to the moon?”

“I don’t know,” said Phillips, laughing.

“Don’t know! Good heavens; and it is upon the testimony of an ignorant and prevaricating witness like this that you are asked to convict the two honourable and highminded gentlemen whom you see in the dock before you!”

Charteris sat down amid the applause of the spectators, and the barrel, or witness-box, being turned on its side, Phillips was rolled out of it. But as this process took some time, and gave rise to too much merriment, the judge ordered the witness-box to be dispensed with, and I was called upon to stand forward as the next witness.

“Tell us what you know about this affair.”

“Cooper told me once that he and Abbing knew a way of getting out at night.”

“Do you know that they ever did go out at night?”

“I know Cooper did.”

“How do you know?”

“Because I once went with him.”

“How did you get out?”

“We got out of the window of the lumber-room, and climbed down the ladder of the gymnasium.”

“That’s all I want. You can cross-examine him now, Charteris, if you like.”

"I should rather think so! I will soon show you, gentlemen of the jury, how little reliance is to be placed on this gentleman's evidence. Now, sir, will you kindly explain to us under what circumstances and for what purpose you went out with the elder prisoner."

"I object to that question," said Kennedy, who had promised to me that I shouldn't be asked it.

"I insist upon it," said Charteris.

"Well, he shan't answer it."

"Am I in a British court of justice!" exclaimed Charteris, throwing himself into a theatrical attitude and banging with his fist upon the table. "My Lord, I beg to state, once and for all, that in the discharge of my duty I am not to be bullied or intimidated by the counsel for the prosecution or any other man."

"Will your lordship give your opinion on this point?" asked Lessing.

"Well, if you ask me, I decide that the witness is not obliged to answer that question. *First*, because I suppose he has been up to some mischief, and certainly broke rules when he went out at night, and no one can be forced to give evidence against himself; *secondly*, because I don't see what this has got to do with the case we are trying, unless you wish to prove that Smith was an accomplice; *thirdly*, because we are wasting a lot of time, and we ought to get the trial over before tea."

So, to my great relief, I was allowed to go. I shall not easily forget the look Cooper gave me as I passed

him. Wood was called next, and Kennedy only asked him one question.

"Has Abbing got a crossbow?"

"Yes."

"How do you know that Abbing has a crossbow?" asked Charteris.

"Because he and Cooper got a hold of me the other day and made me bend down and took shots at me with it," answered Wood, to the great amusement of the spectators.

"Ah! that is a *striking* proof. Gentlemen of the jury, I think you will agree with me that this is the most reliable witness the prosecution has as yet brought forward. Well, I admit the crossbow on behalf of my clients. I shall have something to say about that presently."

"And, by-the-bye," said Kennedy, "I ought to have told you that Lessing and I saw some of the stones that had been thrown into the cucumber frames. They were too big, I think, to have been thrown from an ordinary catapult, and from the shape of the holes, they had evidently not been thrown by the hand, or the glass would have been more smashed than it was."

"Take a note of that, gentlemen, take a note of that! The counsel for the prosecution admits that the stones were not thrown by the hand, and were not thrown from a catapult. That's a very important point."

The next witness called was Cane Primus; but he was objected to, because he was one of the jurymen.

"I don't see that makes any difference," said Kennedy. "If he's a witness he's likely to know all the more about the case."

"I appeal to Magna Charta, that palladium of our liberties," declared the counsel for the defence.

"Well," said Lessing, "there's no need for Magnus Charteris to appeal to Magna Charta. We can do quite well without this witness. I can give you his evidence myself. Last night, Abbing was out of his dormitory at bedtime, and didn't come in till a quarter to ten. I saw him myself, and asked him what he had been doing, and he said he had been at supper in Cooper's study."

"I say, I object most strongly to all this," said Charteris. "The counsel for the prosecution have no business either to make jokes on my name or to give evidence as witnesses."

"If my learned friend will only listen to me a minute, he will see that what I am going to say is in favour of his side. I am pretty sure, and so is Cane, that Abbing was in the dormitory by a quarter before ten, but Mrs Chesman's servant says that the Minster clock struck ten just before she heard the frames go smash. It's only fair to take notice of this."

"It was nearer half-past nine when I came in," said Abbing, eagerly.

"These are all the witnesses we have," said Kennedy, rising to address the court, "and I think they are quite enough. You all know what cads the prisoners at the bar are, and that they are capable of doing almost any-

thing. It's as clear as possible from the evidence that they went out at night, and broke Mrs Chesman's frames with Abbing's crossbow. I don't say, mind you, that it was quite the thing for her to tell Vialls about them smoking, but still she's not half a bad old lady ; and, anyhow, it was a shame of these fellows to play her such a spiteful trick. It couldn't have been any one else who did it, and I think it was very mean of them not to give up their names, and make us lose our half-holiday. I think that's about all I have to say, and I have no doubt you will find them guilty."

"But you haven't gone over the facts of the case," said Tom Cane. "You ought to show us why we are to find them guilty."

"If you don't see it for yourselves you are a set of thick-headed muffs," rejoined Kennedy. "What else can I do ? Would you like to hear any more witnesses ? To me, the whole thing is as plain as a pikestaff."

"I think the prosecution should have called Mrs Chesman," said Charteris. "I am not sure that the proceedings are not invalid, because she is not here to prosecute."

"Let's go down to her garden, and see the frames. Perhaps she'll give us some apples," suggested a jurymen.

Abbing had been employed in writing on a slip of paper, and now passed it to Lessing, who, after a moment's whispered consultation with Kennedy, jumped up, and said—

"By your lordship's permission, I will now call one more witness—a most important one."

Well, just wait, will you? It's my innings now," said Charteris, who had risen to address the jury.

"Yes, yes! Let's hear Charteris! You can call your witness afterwards," cried several of the audience and the jurymen, expecting some fun, and Lessing gave way.

"My lord and gentlemen of the jury," began Charteris, "I assure you that never in the whole course of my professional experience have I approached a case with feelings of——"

"That's out of 'Pickwick,'" said a literary jurymen.

"Will you hold your tongue, sir, and listen to me? If you interrupt me again, I'll give you a good hiding!—Gentlemen, as I was saying, the sentiment of justice is deeply implanted in the human breast. Who is not moved with pity and indignation at seeing an unfortunate fellow-creature falsely charged with the odium of a base and disgraceful crime? Yet such, gentlemen, is the position of the prisoners at the bar, and I see no tear shed for them; I hear no pleading voice raised in their behalf."

Here Charteris applied the corner of a handkerchief to his left eye, and winked with his right one at the jury, after which he went on—

"Bear with my pardonable infirmity. Forgive me, that for a moment I am overcome by sympathy with the sad position of my unfortunate clients.

"I will not enlarge, gentlemen, upon the virtues and

accomplishments of the accused, which are so well known to you all, and which have endeared them to every heart, and gained for them the respect of every well-regulated mind! But I will show you, gentlemen, that the prosecution has utterly broken down, and will satisfy you that the prisoners have been grossly and maliciously calumniated. I have complete confidence in the intelligence and sense of justice of the twelve high-minded men who are to decide this case, and I am sure that you will not be led astray by the evident animus and undignified eagerness with which the case for the prosecution has been carried on—I mean, conducted. I have yet to learn—I request my learned friend opposite me to note these words—I have yet to learn that impudence and arrogance are to be substituted in a court of justice for proofs and arguments. But not in vain, I am sure, shall I point out to you the ludicrous weakness of the case against the prisoners. Not in vain shall I appeal from the heat of passion to the sober calm of justice! Not in vain——!”

Here Charteris stopped and blew his nose, and gave the delighted audience opportunity for a round of applause, in which everybody joined except the prisoners, who, I dare say, were thinking that they would much rather have pleaded their own cause.

“What was I going to say? Oh, yes! The theory of the prosecution is, that the prisoners stole forth under the cover of night, armed with a deadly weapon familiar to us under the name of a crossbow; and, having ascended the

wall of Mrs Chesman's garden, did proceed to smash her cucumber frames. Here I may perhaps be allowed to remind you of the beautiful description of the descent of Apollo, in the first book of the *Iliad*, which is doubtless familiar to you all." ('Oh! oh! Shop!') "My lord, I appeal to you to put a stop to these unseemly interruptions. We have the authority of Homer for saying that the Far-darting-one descended from Olympus angry at heart, and his arrows rattled terribly on the shoulders of him wrathful, and there was a dreadful clang of the silver bow—if you will give me a Homer, I think I could quote the passage in the original! Even thus, we are asked to believe, the prisoners descended from the schoolhouse full of wrath against Mrs Chesman. And first, their bolts went abroad among the much-smashing cucumber frames, and then they bolted, and made off. Gentlemen, will you look at the frank and amiable countenances of the prisoners at the bar, and ask yourselves candidly if they could be imagined capable of such an act!

"Now, there is one point to which I would especially call your attention. We have been told that the prisoners stood on the wall of Mrs Chesman's garden ——"

"I never said that," interrupted Kennedy.

"But we may as well admit it," said Lessing. "Mrs Chesman's servant said that she saw a boy jumping off the wall. Now, we all know that it is easy to get on the wall of her garden on the outside, by climbing the tree behind Dr Wilson's stables; but the wall is too high to



be climbed from the inside. There are no fruit-trees on it, and Mrs Chesman says her ladder was locked up in the coachhouse all night. They must have been standing on the wall."

"I thank my learned friend for his candid admission. That is just what I wanted to show you. If you remember, it has already been admitted that the missiles were thrown by a crossbow, and not by hand or from a catapult. Now, if you think for a minute, you will see that with a crossbow you can fire at anything that is on a level with you or above you; but you can't shoot at a thing below you, because the stone or arrow would slip off as soon as you pointed the crossbow downwards."

"By Jove! there is something in that."

"Of course, there is! I submit, therefore, that the case for the prosecution has entirely broken down. The prisoners couldn't have got out again; they were not likely to have been able to hit the frames from the other side of the wall, so they must have fired from the wall; and I have shown you that they could not use a crossbow to shoot at anything beneath them."

"How do you know that they hadn't a rope, and didn't climb into and out of the garden by fastening it to the wall?"

"I reject the suggestion of my learned friend with the contempt which it undoubtedly deserves. And, in conclusion, gentlemen, let me remind you of the beautiful passage of Shakespeare—

‘The quality of mercy is not strained.  
Guilty, or not guilty, that is the question.  
For Brutus is an honourable man !’

And so are you all—all honourable men. Therefore, with confidence, I demand, in the name of justice, in the name of truth, in the name of everything, that by a unanimous verdict of acquittal you wipe away the stigma that has been attempted to be cast on the fair fame of the prisoners, and restore them to their former high place in the estimation, and the veneration, and the admiration of the—of the society of which they are at once the ornaments and the pride. My lord, I have done, but before I leave the case in the hands of the jury, I have got one more witness to call who will testify to the character of the accused.”

A boy called Beesley was now summoned, and when the applause excited by Charteris’ speech had subsided, he was asked—

“What do you know about the prisoner Abbing?”

“I have been at school with him for two years.”

“Is he a particular friend of yours?”

“Not exactly,” said Beesley, smiling.

“Do you think him capable of the crime of which he is accused?”

“I don’t think he has the pluck to do anything in which he would be likely to be found out and punished.”

“The jury will take notice of that. If it is thought necessary, I can bring forward several other witnesses to

speak to the same point. Do you know anything of the prisoner Cooper ?”

“Not much.”

“I asked you if you knew *anything*, sir. Don’t trifle with me.”

“He kicked me the day before yesterday.”

“Oh! And did he assign any reason, or reasons, for submitting you to this painful operation ?”

“He only said that it was good for small boys.”

“Notice that, gentlemen of the jury. This individual, whom the counsel for the prosecution has tried to make out a monster of iniquity, takes a tender interest in the education of the young, and exerts all his energies in their welfare.”

“You have been putting him up to talk this nonsense,” growled Cooper, interrupting the trial for the first time, and evidently not very well satisfied with his counsel or the witness to his character.

“You are ungrateful to me, prisoner. If you can call any other witnesses to your character, by all means do so.”

“Oh yes, laugh away,” said Cooper, wrathfully. “You have made up your mind to find me guilty, I see.”

“Not all,” said the judge. “Gentlemen, I must say that there is not enough evidence to go to the jury, in my opinion. I don’t think the case is made out, so far as we have gone. If I were on the jury, the only verdict I could give would be ‘Not guilty, but they had better not do it again.’”

"I beg your lordship's pardon," said Lessing. "I have another witness. Call Abbing."

"What do you mean?"

"Abbing has turned king's evidence, and is going to tell us all he knows about the matter."

"Oh, that's very like him," said the judge. "Crier! fetch him out of the dock!"

A great sensation was caused by this announcement. Cooper cast a look of rage and surprise at his companion, and said audibly—

"Curse you!"

"Look here, prisoner," exclaimed the judge. "If you say that, or anything else like it again, I'll have you well thrashed for contempt of court."

Abbing was now roughly dragged over the bars of the fire-guard, two boys taking hold of his arms, and one pulling him by the hair, and was set down in a weeping condition at the table, where the witnesses had stood. Being exhorted to stop crying, and say all he knew, he began in a whining tone, turning his back to Cooper, and looking on the ground.

"It was Cooper who did it. I didn't do anything more than lend him my crossbow. He asked me to come with him, and I wouldn't."

"You said that you were shocked at the very idea of such a proposal?"

"No; you said that you were afraid of being found out; wasn't that more like it, Abbing?"

"I didn't see the use of getting myself into a scrape for him."

"I'm sure you are not telling the whole truth. I know by your face. Out with it at once."

"Why, you little sneak, it was you who proposed it," cried Cooper.

"Ah! and are you sure you didn't go?"

"No, I didn't. Cooper persuaded me to go; but afterwards I thought I wouldn't. So I lent him my crossbow, and he went alone."

"You were afraid?"

"I didn't care to go."

"And did he break the frames?"

"He told me this morning that he had done it."

"I call upon the Court to observe that this is hearsay evidence, which is not admissible," said Charteris. "You have no business to use any one's admissions against himself."

"All right! we'll remember that," said Marshall. "Now, I suppose we have got to give our verdict?"

"Wait a minute, you donkey! The judge has got to sum up."

"Well, I shan't be long about that," said Henderson. "Gentlemen of the jury, you have heard the evidence. If you think the prisoner is guilty, you will say so. If you think he is not guilty, you will say so. If you think he is guilty, and don't like to say so, you will be a set of idiots."

"Stop!" cried Charteris. "I want to say something."

You have all noticed with what faithfulness and ability I have discharged my duty to my clients. I now beg to state that, after hearing the last witness's evidence, I throw up my brief!"

And crumpling up the paper on which he had been taking notes of the evidence, he threw it into the air, and gave it a kick with his foot, to the great amusement of every one, except, of course, the prisoners.

"Now, we must retire to consider our verdict," said Cane.

"Retire!" exclaimed Marshall. "What do we want to do with retiring? Surely we have all made up our minds!"

"Oh! but the jury always retire," persisted Cane. "My father is a lawyer, and I have often been in the court with him."

"Bosh! Let's consider our verdict here. I say guilty."

"Of course!"

"So do I!"

"Well, I suppose we are all agreed!"

"Stop a minute," said Cane. "I'm not sure about it."

"Not sure about it? Why, man, are you a brainless idiot? It's as plain as Punch that Cooper did it."

"Of course it is! But I don't think it is proved by the evidence. We ought not to receive what Abbing tells us that Cooper told him. And then, about that crossbow. I don't see how he could keep the stones on when he pointed it downwards."

"Oh! he managed it somehow or other."

"What fools you are! Don't you know the dodge about a piece of soap?" suggested the counsel for the prisoner. "He could easily manage it in some way of that sort."

"Of course! I wonder we never thought of that before! Now, come along, and let's give our verdict. You agree, Cane?"

"No. I don't! I don't quite see that the case is proved."

"Well, then, don't see it! All the rest of us find him guilty."

"Ah! but you must be unanimous. Haven't you made up your mind yet, Cane?"

"No!"

"Well, then, look sharp about it!"

"It isn't such a very big one, is it?" asked a facetious jurymen.

"I'll tell you what," said Marshall; "I want to have this thing over, because I have an imposition to do, and if you don't make up your mind quickly, Cane, I'll kick you!"

"Well, if the other fellows think he is guilty, I'll give in," said Cane.

"That's all right!"

"Crier! proclaim silence," said the judge. "That will do, thanks; you've made quite noise enough with that bell of yours. Gentlemen of the jury, are you agreed upon your verdict?"

"We are," answered Marshall. "Long ago, all except one donkey."

"How say you, is the prisoner at the bar guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty!"

"I will now pronounce sentence."

But at that moment Cooper flung down the fire-guard, rushed out, and made a dash towards the door. Barristers, jurymen, and all, jumped up and flung themselves upon him, and after a short scuffle he was secured and held still while the judge pronounced sentence.

"Prisoner at the bar—or rather not at the bar!—after a long and impartial trial, you have been found guilty, by a jury of your schoolfellows, of a piece of wanton and malicious mischief. We all think it was low of you, and we think that it was still worse, not to confess and save the whole school from being punished on your account. The sentence is: That you be taken into the yard to-morrow morning, and compelled to run the gantlet twice between all the boys, drawn up in two lines, and furnished with knotted towels and handkerchiefs."

"And," added Charteris, "we hope that you will spend the interval between this and the time of your punishment in meditating over the wickedness of your conduct, and putting on at least two jackets and several pairs of trousers."

"Now for Abbing!"

"Oh, no!" cried Abbing, in alarm. "I am to get off."

"Oh, that's cool! Who told you that?"



"I turned king's evidence."

"You are very little better than Cooper, and you are a sneak besides. Musn't Abbing be sentenced, Henderson?"

"That depends on the jury. Do they find him guilty?"

"Of course," said Marshall.

"Oh! I say, that's too bad! He didn't break the frames, you know."

"I think we can find him guilty of breaking the frames in a minor degree," said Cane.

"Yes, yes," cried several boys. "He must run the gantlet too."

"Well, Abbing, you are found guilty of breaking Mrs Chesman's cucumber frames in a minor degree, and I think you should run the gantlet once, instead of twice," said Charteris. "What do you say, Henderson?"

"I think, considering everything, that it would do him good. Now, let them go. The execution will take place after breakfast to-morrow morning."

Cooper was then allowed to make off, and Abbing was kicked out after him in a great state of disgust.

"You brute! you *have* kicked my shins," said Cane, the conscientious juryman, looking after Cooper. "See if I don't give you some sweet ones to-morrow."

Thus ended this celebrated trial, which we considered to be a most just and satisfactory one. Scarcely anybody was sorry for Abbing and Cooper. They were generally disliked, and I am afraid some of us were not

sorry to think that we should have an opportunity of paying them out for injuries received. But if so, we reckoned a little to fast. There was a slip between the sentence and the execution.

"This is for you, Abbing, to-morrow," said little Wood, beginning to make a large knot on his towel as soon as we got into our dormitory that night. "Hallo! where is Abbing?"

"With his friend, Cooper, I suppose."

"Why, I thought Cooper would hate him like poison, now, for his sneaking."

"Well, Cooper dragged him off to his study, and we heard him storming away at a great rate," said Tom Cane. "But I suppose they have made it up since then, for I saw them very lovingly together just before prayers."

"A nice pair they are!" said George Kennedy. "I suppose they are comforting each other in the condemned cell. Let Mr Abb. stop there all night if it will do him any good."

"Oh! he'll come sneaking in presently."

But when we awoke next morning we found that Abbing was not among us.

He did not appear at breakfast either, nor did Cooper, and we could not make out what had become of them. Somebody looked into Cooper's study. There was no one there, and his bed had not been slept in. Then we began to suspect the truth. The lumber room was visited, and the window found wide open. Our intended victims must have run away. And to make the matter

almost certain, Mrs Bramble came to ask us if we knew anything about a piece of cold beef and two loaves that had disappeared from the larder through the night.

No time was lost in telling Mr Vialls, and then there was a nice hullabaloo. The police were applied to, and inquiries made in all directions, but no one had seen or heard of the fugitives. It was evident they had gone, but where they had gone to we could not even guess.

Nothing else was talked about all that day, but the only light thrown on the subject was by a small boy, who suddenly remembered that some time before Cooper had asked for a Bradshaw, and said he wanted to know the way to Bristol. Upon this hint one of the masters set off to Bristol, and then another boy all at once recollected that he had heard Abbing talking of Yarmouth, and Mr Vialls, who was very much annoyed about the whole matter, was on the point of setting off for that place, when a telegram came to say that two boys, answering to the description of Cooper and Abbing, had been found at Liverpool. Away he went to Liverpool; but it was on a wild-goose chase, for the boys turned out to be strangers to him.

In the meanwhile, we boys greatly enjoyed the excitement and the relaxation of discipline caused by the absence of two of the masters. Neither Cooper nor Abbing were heard of at their homes, and it was supposed that they had somehow managed to get away to sea.

A week passed, and still there was no news of them, and we almost gave up expecting it. Mr Vials ordered the lumber-room window to be nailed up; and things went on in the usual way.





## CHAPTER XIX.

### SEEING A GHOST.



**I** HAVE now been for several months at the Whitminster Grammar School, and have not treated my readers to a cricket match, or a regular fight, or any very wonderful and daring exploit. The fact is, that anything very wonderful seldom happened among us. I have undertaken to describe the lives of myself and my companions; and these lives were generally a monotonous round of learning lessons and not learning them, of getting into scrapes and getting out of them, of feeling happy and miserable in a small way that did not seem small to us, of quarrelling and making friends again, so I find it difficult to entertain you with exciting incidents. I have a good mind to put in some athletics just hereabout; but there is plenty of that sort of thing in other books of the same kind, and, to tell the truth, I am a little sick of it. Now, however, I am going to tell about something out of the common run of events which happened at this time.

Here we are in our dormitory again. Our dormitory was the largest in the house, and this half we had had three new beds put into it. Lessing was one of our companions, and a jolly funny fellow the old Monkey was. The others were the brothers Cane, "Balbus and Caius," as we soon got to call them. It was Lessing who started this name, and you may imagine the number of jokes that were made every day about Balbus building a wall, and Caius valuing virtue at a great price, and so forth. Caius was the clever one, the smaller of the two, who was in the lower fourth form already, and was a sort of boy that the masters thought a great deal of, though I don't think we particularly liked him. Old Balbus was a much greater favourite. He stuck hopelessly at the bottom of Mr Williamson's lower form, and often got laughed at for his simplicity ; but he was always good-humoured and obliging, and that of course goes a long way further with boys than all the cleverness in the world.

We ought to have been going to bed, but we weren't. The Kangaroo and Wood, half undressed, were chasing each other round the dormitory. Balbus, sitting on his bed, was ruefully contemplating a tremendous rent he had just made in his trousers. Three fellows standing at one side of a bed had hold of Lessing by the legs, while another three on the opposite side pulled him by the arms, and the whole six were apparently trying to tear him in two pieces. Lessing, with his eyes shut, seemed to be quite comfortable, till somebody

slyly tickled him in the ribs, and he gave a great shriek.

"Oh, shut up!" cried George Kennedy; "you'll have Vials here."

"I believe he's gone out to-night," said Wood.

"I believe he hasn't. Anyhow, it's time to get to bed. Look sharp! I'll turn out the gas in two minutes."

"Well, let's have a tale," said the Kangaroo, as he tucked himself up beneath the blankets.

"Oh yes! A tale, a tale! Come along, Lessing; you are the fellow for a rattling good one."

"Am I?" said Lessing, looking behind him as if to catch sight of a caudal appendage, and then turning rapidly round and round like a kitten trying to get hold of its tail, to our great amusement. But Kennedy turned out the gas, and when we had all got into bed, Lessing was persuaded to begin.

"There once was a shrimp," he said, and stopped.

"Well?"

"I ate it for my breakfast—that's all."

"Oh I say, Monkey, no humbug. Give us a regular tale, like that one about the smugglers. Tell us that again, if you don't know any others."

"No; I'll tell you one about the life and adventures of a monkey."

"All right! That will be a jolly one. Fire away!"

"Here goes, then! I was born at Gorryworrykick-aboo—a place in Africa, not many thousand miles from the Mountains of the Moon. My parents lived at No. 10

Hollow Tree Street, top storey—which was a very nice place of residence, only not near any railway station. They were most respectable apes of the orang-outang family, and my father had several times been elected Mayor by the other monkeys. Our family were noted for long tails, but mine was not a very long one.

"I had one brother older than myself. His first name was Poshyalickybollymungotimbugarry, and his second name was something like this, but I forget what it was exactly. We went to the Gorryworrykickaboo Grammar School, which was kept by a venerable old lion, an awfully waxy fellow, who used to roar at us, and lick us with his tail when we were naughty. There was also an assistant master, a young crocodile, who was learning to be a lawyer; but we didn't care for him much, because we could always jump up on a tree and get out of his way. He wore spectacles, and was a regular muff of a beast. We used to put him in a great wax by calling him 'Scaly.'

"My brother and I were boarders, and we liked school very well, only we thought that we were not well enough fed. We had nuts for breakfast, and dried camel's flesh for dinner; and at tea we had nothing but palm leaves and butter. But on Sundays we had generally roast sailor and plum-pudding; and we often added to our fare cockatoos, which we shot with catapults, or sometimes caught by putting salt on their tails.

"We had plenty of lessons. We didn't have any Latin and Greek, but we did Arnold's exercises in the



monkey language. There used to be sentences in it like this : 'Balbus is eating a nut.' 'Caius has pulled his father's tail.' 'Balbus exclaims that it is all over with the hippopotamus.' 'It is the part of a good monkey to learn not many things but much.' Then we were taught to swim, and jump, and ride on young jackals, and if we fell off we caught toko, I can tell you. 'Toko' is a word in the monkey language which is translated in the dictionary by 'punishment, chastisement, the infliction of blows.' On Wednesdays and Saturdays we had a half-holiday, and used to go out cockatoo-hunting, or to play at boomerang. My brother was a very good boomerang player, and was made captain of the first eleven.

"We used to get into a great many scrapes. Once my brother had half of his tail cut off for running away with the birch. Another time I had the whole of mine cut off for eating a cocoa-nut in school. This was rather a severe punishment, but the old lion was in a great wax that day at a young rhinoceros who never would learn his repetition.

"Once, when I was about fourteen, and we were at home for the holidays, a great calamity happened to our family. We had all gone to a flower show except my brother, who was left to look after the soup. While he was stirring it, he unfortunately fell into the kettle and was boiled down. We couldn't make out what had become of him, and we only began to suspect the truth when my father swallowed his watch in a cocoa-nut shell of soup, and it stuck in his throat and choked him.

My mother was so much annoyed at the death of her husband and son, that she went off to a solitary place in the mountains, and there died also, of a broken heart, leaving me quite desolate and very sad.

“I went back to school and soon recovered my spirits among my companions. But I got into trouble. One day I was translating this sentence. ‘Kicky rum-belumb below stokalooryooryow kickum bow-wow-um ;’ which means, ‘the lion ate the dog’, because bow-wow-um is in the accusative case. But I thought it was nominative to the verb, and said ‘the dog ate the lion.’ Now the old lion was in a bad humour, because Mrs Lion had kicked him out of bed that morning, and besides, he thought I meant to be cheeky to him ; so he threw the book at my head and roared, ‘Goshawoshy shillabaloo julius cæsar tuptoumen,’ which means, ‘you are a disgrace to the school, sir, and I will no longer put up with all your abominable idleness and impertinence !’ I told him it was only a slip, but he wouldn’t believe it, and set me, as an imposition, to gather five hundred palm leaves, and threatened to expel me the next time I got into a scrape. This wasn’t long of happening ; for soon afterwards, old Scaly reported me for tying a string of coconut shells to his tail. They locked me up in the coal cellar, but as I didn’t see the good of being expelled, I thought I should run away ; and so I did, after getting out of the cellar by scratching a hole with my claws.

“When I had travelled over the desert for three days and six nights, I saw the old lion coming after me, and

the crocodile waddling behind him, carrying a sack to put me into when they caught me. But I ran up a palm tree and made faces at them, and they couldn't climb up to me. They stood at the bottom of the tree for about two hours and a-half, and threatened me with all sorts of terrible punishments, but I only laughed and said, 'Follywolly jungo boo jingery ballywally didoimeen ;' which means 'will you do it now or will you wait till you can catch me,' and I threw date stones at them and broke old Scaly's spectacles. At length they got tired of waiting and went to fetch a ladder ; but they were so long about it, that of course I made off, and was a dozen miles away by the time they came back.

"I travelled on for three more days, living on cocoa nuts, and pine apples, and blackberries, and such like fruits ; and at length I came to the house of a very respectable old baboon, who received me kindly, and hired me to be one of his servants. I had not much to do, only to brush my master's whiskers and bring up his hot water in the morning, and to go for his letters every afternoon, and for four years I led a very happy life in his house. But at the end of that time I fell in love with his daughter, the most lovely young babooness that I ever saw, and this got me into trouble. We had agreed to run away and be married at Timbuctoo, and we had actually got to the station and taken our tickets, when her father and brothers overtook us, and after giving me a dreadful beating, tied me to a tree, and dragged her home to be sent to a babooness boarding-school.

"I remained here for two days, and should have died from the pain of my wounds and want of food, if some men had not come up. At first they frightened me very much, but I soon found that they meant to be kind to me. They untied me from the tree, put mustard plasters on my wounds, and gave me some castor oil, and in a day or two I was quite well again. Then I begged them to let me return to my beloved babooness, but they didn't seem to understand what I said ; and when I began to try to move them by bursting into a long and piteous fit of howling, one of them hit me over the nose with a ramrod and told me to 'hold my jaw.' I had begun to understand their language a little, so I put up my paw to my chin, but instead of being pleased by my obedience, they burst out laughing and teased me most shamefully.

"I soon saw that they intended to take me with them, so I resigned myself to my fate. They brought me to England, and on the journey I amused myself by looking about me, and by making verses in the monkey language."

"How could you do that?" asked Ben Cane, who had been listening in such rapt attention, that I dare say he almost believed Lessing's tale to be true.

"Oh, it's as easy as possible. I can dash them off as fast as you can do Latin verses, Balbus. Every hexameter must begin with a word of twenty-five syllables, and the last foot but one must always be half a dactyl and half a spondee, and the rest can be anything you please. I'll show you a few some day.

"But now, I am at the end of my story. I was taken to a town called Whitminster, and there put into a menagerie along with a kangaroo, an elephant, several donkeys, and other animals, none of which are half so pretty or so clever as I am. That's all for just now ; but I may tell you some more of my adventures some other night."

"That's what I call a splendid story !" exclaimed George Kennedy. "How on earth did you ever manage to make it all up, Monkey ?"

"Oh, you got it out of some book, I'll be bound," said Cane.

"There, that's just like you, Caius. You are jealous of Lessing. Let's hear if you could tell half such a good tale."

"I don't remember any, or I would. But let's have one from your brother."

"Oh, yes ! Let's hear the life of the old Kangaroo."

"I don't know what to tell about it."

"Yes, you do. You must have had lots of adventures in Australia, or you are a regular muff of a Kangaroo."

"Well, I'll do my best," said Harry. "Let me see. Where was I born ? I don't exactly remember, but I think it was somewhere near Ballarat. I was a very fine looking animal, and belonged to a good family. My brothers were all six feet six at least, and very good at running, and jumping, and fighting, except one of them called George, who was a great stupid muff of a Kangaroo."

"I was sent to a private boarding-school, where I was very good and diligent, and never had anything worse done to me than being made to scratch my lesson three times on the sand with my paw.

"When I was about six years old, a number of curious-looking creatures came to our parts who didn't seem to be able to walk on their four legs, but used the two front ones for carrying things, and for hitting one another. They had funny shaped tools with which they turned up the earth, and searched in it for a sort of yellow, shining dust, which they seemed to be very glad to find.

"My mother called these creatures men, and told me not to go near them or she would give me a good whipping. But one day I disobeyed her, and was caught by some of them and dragged off with a rope round my neck, which hurt just as much as the whipping would have done.

"They took me to the sea-side, and put me on board a sort of moving house, which was carried along by large white wings. I was dreadfully sick when it first began to move. In about three months we arrived in England, and I was put into a cage and shown off at a menagerie among a lot of other beasts. On the whole, I led a very decent life, and was visited by many ladies and gentlemen, who gave me nice things, such as ginger-bread nuts and buns, but I would rather have been back in Australia again.

"One day a naughty boy, called Bob Smith, who

was looking at the menagerie, began to tease me, so I got angry and dragged him inside of my cage, and tried to rip him up with my claws in spite of his howling. Then one of the keepers came to rescue this boy, and I tried to rip him up ; but he was too sharp for me. He had a shining instrument in his hand, and when I was going to set upon him he pricked me with it so that I squealed and drew back into a corner of my cage. Since that I have been very well behaved, and have not meddled with any of the visitors, though I should like to give it to that boy Smith. I don't think I remember anything more worth telling."

"Oh, that's not nearly so good as old Lessing's. Can't you give us another, Lessing?"

"No, I can't. Besides it isn't my turn. Let's have another story, some fellow."

"Now then, Jemima. Here's a chance of distinguishing yourself."

"I'm sure I don't remember one," said Phillips.

"I think I know one," put in Ben Cane.

"Oh! but your stories are awfully slow, Balbus."

"It's about a ghost."

"Is it?" cried George Kennedy. "Shut up, Smith. Let's hear, Balbus."

"I read it in a book the other day. It's about a fellow at Coleworth school. They had all got into a row with the headmaster, and he said he would make them lose a half-holiday if he didn't give up his name, because somebody had barked some trees. Then this

fellow hadn't done it, but the boys said he had, and he was going to be pitched into ; but afterwards they thought it was another fellow, and he didn't deny it, only they couldn't make it out at all."

"Nor can we," said Tom Cane.

"You have got too many he's and it's on board, Balbus."

"Well, I can't remember the fellows' names. But the end of the story was, that some of them waited one night among the trees, and when they saw the ghost coming—by-the-bye, I forgot to tell you that it was suspected that a ghost had done this—and one of the fellows said he wasn't afraid of it, and he got some other fellows to go out and watch for it with him, and when they caught him, they found it was this fellow, and he was walking in his sleep with a night-shirt on ; and that made them think it was a ghost. The head-master had been keeping all the fellows in, and he said it was a great shame of the fellow not to give up his name ; and he didn't know what to say when he found it was himself. And so the other fellow got off, and it was never found out who barked the trees, only he suspected the wrong fellow—I mean the master. It's a jolly story !"

"I dare say it is, Balbus, and we are much obliged to you for telling it ; only I think we had rather read it in the book, and then perhaps we'll understand it."

"Well, I've told it as well as I could. See if you can tell a story any better yourself."



"I don't know one. But let's have another from Lessing."

"I think I can tell you a ghost story which I have read," said Lessing. "It was in poetry, and I don't know if I remember it all, but I will try."

"There was once a fellow who, like a great many others, always said he did not believe in ghosts, but, nevertheless did not care to linger long on the stairs at night if the gas happened to be out. One night he was sitting reading a book of ghost stories, in which he was so much interested that he did not notice it was long past his usual bedtime, till he heard his mother calling to him—'Tommy, are you not gone to bed yet?' 'All right, Mater! Just going!' He shut the book, put out the gas, and began to grope his way up stairs, feeling more anxious than usual to be safe in his room. Once there, he was not long of tumbling into bed; but somehow the ghost stories he had read kept him awake for a good while. Every little noise he imagined resembled some of the ghost-like sounds he had just been reading of. He had not lain for more than ten minutes in this state, when he was sure he felt the bed shake a little; again a stronger shake, and a groan was heard at the foot of the bed. Slowly, and inch by inch, he stretched out his knees, which had been supporting the bed-clothes in the shape of pyramid. He scarcely dared to look, but making up his mind to see what it really was, he sat right up in his bed. Oh, what a bump his heart gave! His teeth chattered, and his blood ran cold. There, at

the foot of the bed, glaring at him, with a hideous grin and rolling its large bloodshot eyes, was a frightful head—the very embodiment of all the horrible faces he had pictured to himself when reading the ghost stories. Slowly the head rose, grinning and rolling its terrible eyes, and Tommy saw it had a body like a skeleton rolled in a winding sheet, with long skinny arms and fingers like talons. He could neither move nor call for help, he felt that the figure exercised a sort of spell over him; and when it said, in a deep sepulchral voice, ‘Follow me,’ he slipped out of bed, and scarcely knowing what he was doing, followed the beckoning apparition down the stairs and through the door, which seemed to open of itself at their approach. He had not even waited to put on any of his clothes, and now that they were in the open air, how cold he felt, as shivering and shaking he followed his ghostly guide! Down the street, out of the town, where could he be going? At last they reached a dismal piece of waste ground, just beyond the town, and there he saw a sight that would have made the bravest tremble. There were dozens of hideous skeletons with fearful rolling eyes and ghastly grins, just like his guide. Oh! what a yell they gave when they saw him! They rushed at him as if they would tear him to pieces, but his companion, who seemed to have some power over them, sent them off in all directions with a few well-delivered kicks that made their fleshless carcasses rattle as if they would fall to pieces; then turning to Tommy, in his unearthly voice, he said—

“ ‘ We play each night at football here ;  
Like mortals—you may think it queer ;—  
Our goals are torches flaring red,  
The ball we use—A Human Head !  
“ Stand here, and if that goal be passed,  
That very moment is your last.  
If by you once this ball has sped,  
The next we'll play with—your own head ! !’

“ Having summoned back his weird band, he placed Tommy in front of two blazing torches, and repeating his caution about not letting the ‘ ball ’ pass, he cried, ‘ Now, friends, bring forth The Head, and let the sport begin.’

“ ‘ Up rush'd the ugliest of the crew,  
And at his leader's feet he threw—  
Oh ! horror, 'twas a Human Head,  
Which looked much more alive than dead,  
With gnashing teeth and rolling eyes,  
That seemed of an unearthly size.  
One kick, and with a fearful yell,  
The head went off, and then it fell  
Among that savage brutal crew,  
And very soon was black and blue.  
Backwards and forwards, here and there,  
On the ground, and in the air !  
How they kicked that head about,  
Till the rolling eyes fell out !  
But although the eyes were gone,  
Still the teeth kept grinding on.’

“ There stood poor Tommy in terror lest it should come his way, and remembering the warning he had got, he knew he must not let it pass him, or they would use his head in the same fashion.

“ For a good while he was left alone, and the game was carried on at the other end of the ground. All of a

sudden, however, he saw the whole pack rushing up to his end screaming and yelling fearfully, and there, bounding along in front, was the dreadful head, with its jaws going like a sausage-machine. On, on, it came! 'Stop it! stop it!' rung in his ears. It was close upon him. Out went his bare foot! Clash went the teeth! and seizing hold of his toes, held on like a vice. He gave one vigorous kick to free himself, and sent his cousin Frank (who was trying to pull him out of bed by the toes) spinning up against the wall!—'Why, you lazy chap, Tom, it's nine o'clock, and we have to be down at the Park by ten to play these High School Fellows.'

"I say, Lessing," asked old Balbus, who had been listening with his mouth wide open, "is that story true, do you think?"

"I don't know, I read it in a book."

"But there aren't any such things as ghosts?"

"There aren't now, but there used to be," said little Wood, with an air of great wisdom.

"Stuff!" pronounced Tom Cane. "Everybody knows that ghosts are all humbug, and always were. But I like ghosts' tales all the same. Hallo!"

This exclamation was caused by the appearance of something white which rose in the middle of the room. For a moment we were all startled, but then we saw it was that mad Lessing who had quietly slipped out of his bed and was holding up his pillow from behind it.

"Oh, I'll sort this ghost," cried Kennedy, jumping

out of bed with his pillow, and making a charge at Lessing, who gave a howl and darted off.

"Hooray! Let's have some fun," said I, following his example. "Vialls must be out, or he would have been up here on his rounds long ago."

"Well, I'll tell you what. We'll dress up a ghost, and go and frighten the fellows in one of the other dormitories."

"Oh, splendid!"

"I'm game for anything. Come along!"

So, about half-a-dozen of us put on our trousers and sallied forth to see if any of the other boys were awake. But the house was quite silent, and it was only when we had gone up stairs that we heard the sound of voices in a small dormitory next that lumber room which I have already mentioned.

"There's old Wilson spinning one of his yarns," whispered Lessing, as we stole cautiously up to the door. "Now you'll see me give him a fright."

And putting his mouth to the keyhole he uttered a sepulchral groan which had the effect of bringing the conversation within to a sudden end.

"Listen! What's that?" we heard one of them say. Lessing gave another groan.

"Oh, yes! Don't you try on any of your tricks," cried Wilson.

"Boo-oo!" said Lessing.

"I'll come and shy my water jug over you."

"Be-wa-re!" growled Lessing; but as just then we

heard somebody jump out of bed, he started back, and we all rushed off. Tom Cane ran into the lumber-room, shutting the door after him, some of us crouched down in dark corners, and Lessing merely stepped back so that when the door of the dormitory was opened he was concealed behind it.

"I'll souse some of you fellows," said Wilson, appearing with his water jug in one hand and advancing a step or two into the passage.

He peered about but could see nothing in the darkness, and was about to retire when Harry Kennedy and I began to titter, unable to restrain ourselves, when we saw how Lessing was standing close beside him.

"Oh! you are there, are you? Danby, just bring a light, will you? and you other fellows, fetch your water jugs here."

In a minute the gas in the passage was lit and we were all revealed. Lessing bolted out, and splash went the contents of Wilson's water jug after him. But suddenly a scream was heard inside of the lumber room—the door was flung open—Tom Cane rushed out with a face of horror.

"Oh, the ghost! the ghost! There's one in there, I'm sure. For goodness' sake come away."

"What a fool you are, Cane," said George Kennedy. "What's the matter?"

"It's true. Go and look for yourself," exclaimed Cane, who showed such evident marks of fright, that we saw he was not humbugging. And just at that moment,

sure enough, a noise was heard inside the lumber-room, and, seized with a sudden panic, we all rushed off, some into the dormitory, and some down the passage, at the end of which we ran full upon Mr Vialls.

"Oh! please sir, there's a ghost there," cried Ben Cane, catching hold of his hand.

"Ghost! Nonsense! What is the meaning of this, boys?"

"But there is, sir. My brother saw it."

"Yes, sir, there is. I was in the lumber room and heard a noise behind the trunks. I thought at first it was a mouse, but in a minute a figure in white got up and came at me."

"We all heard it."

"Silly fellows!" said Mr Vialls. "I think it is my cane and not the ghost that you have to be afraid of. Your consciences are troubled by knowing that you are breaking rules, and you have allowed yourselves to be frightened at nothing. I'll go into the lumber room and show you if there is a ghost. Kennedy, you are not afraid to come with me, are you?"

"No, sir," said George Kennedy, but not very confidently.

Following Mr Vialls at a respectable distance, we returned up the passage, and he walked straight into the lumber-room, George Kennedy and Lessing went with him, and I plucked up courage to go also, though I confess nothing would have made me enter the room alone. We three stood at the door ready for instant

flight ; Mr Vialls advanced into the room and looked about.

We could see and hear nothing.

"Of course ! The boy has been frightened out of his wits by a rat ! Hush !"

There was a slight stir behind one of the boxes. We boys drew back a step, but Mr Vialls put his hand behind the box, and after groping about for a minute, caught hold of some one by the hair. An exclamation of pain followed, at which Kennedy and I bolted out of the room again, though old Lessing stood his ground like a man. In one moment more Mr Vialls had dragged out into the passage—Cooper !

Fancy our astonishment ! We could scarcely believe our eyes, but we all knew Cooper's voice.

"Well, you have got me," he said sulkily.

And then out crept Abbing, dressed in a suit of light clothes that accounted for Cane's ghost. He looked bewildered, and at once began to cry, which persuaded us that it could be no one but he.

Fear had given place to amazement, and we all crowded round ; but Mr Vialls' voice was heard in a tone that was not to be disobeyed :

"Go to your rooms at once ! Kennedy, give me a list of these boys to-morrow morning."

Very unwillingly we returned to our rooms to astonish the other fellows by our news. We scarcely wasted a thought on what would be done to us for breaking rules, but could talk about nothing else than



this sudden appearance of our schoolfellows. There was little sleep for any of us that night.

Next morning, you may fancy what important persons we were, and how often we had to tell our story. Nothing had excited so much interest in the school since I came to it. Why had Cooper and Abbing remained in the lumber room? How had they not been found out? What would be done with them?

But not to weary the reader with all our wonderings and speculations, I will tell at once all the facts of the case. Cooper and Abbing had never left the house. They had concealed themselves in a closet near the lumber room, leaving the window open to make it be supposed that they had run away, but not intending to do so till they hoped that all inquiry after them had been given up. The screwing up of the window by order of Mr Vialls had shut off their means of escape, and they did not dare to come down for fear of being seen. So they established themselves in the lumber-room, and waited for a chance of getting away unperceived. They had provisions with them, but these had just come to an end when the discovery was made, and the two supposed fugitives were besides heartily sick of their confinement. It was said that they spent half the day in quarrelling with each other, and that Abbing wanted to give himself up, but Cooper wouldn't let him.

By the afternoon we knew that Cooper had been sent away. Abbing, as he was supposed to have acted

under the influence of the older boy, was not expelled, and before he came among us again, Mr Dalton made a speech to the whole school, asking us to receive him as if nothing had happened. The only punishment he had, was being confined to bounds for the rest of the half ; but he had evidently learned a lesson from what he had gone through. For a long time he kept very quiet, and behaved himself in a way that showed a wholesome dread of being found out at any more tricks.

If I am not mistaken, he was also turned out of the Minster choir ; at least I know Harry Kennedy was put into it about this time, and I think it was in Abbing's place.





## CHAPTER XX.

### CASTOR AND POLLUX.

**E**VERY day now my friendship with Harry Kennedy became closer, and every day my admiration for him increased. All the boys liked him ; but in my eyes he was a hero, a very Bayard, without fear and without reproach. We were inseparable. I did not care about going down in my form, if thus I could get to sit beside him. I played in no game unless he were in it too. On Sundays I would walk with no one but Harry Kennedy. When I went to the dentist's to have a tooth drawn, I got Harry to accompany me, for I thought that before him I could not flinch or cry out. You may laugh at all this, but such is the devotion of a real schoolboy friendship. I used even to wish for a chance of braving the tender mercies of Mr Vialls, if it were only for Harry's sake, or in his company.

I only remember one quarrel between us. It befell that on a certain day Mr Williamson was correcting our exercises, and we were understood to be learning our

Virgil. Understood, I say, because some of us employed the greater part of the time allotted for this purpose in occupations of a more congenial nature. For instance, Phillips was reading a novel placed inside the pages of his dictionary ; Lessing was writing a letter in dog Latin to his friend George Kennedy ; Abbing was eating gingerbread ; and Balbus was sharpening a pen-knife on a whetstone concealed under the desk. I think I have mentioned before that Balbus had a weakness for knives, of which he frequently had half-a-dozen in his pockets, and spent much time in whetting and polishing them. As for me, at the risk of detection and possible punishment, I had left my proper place and established myself between him and the Kangaroo. But Harry didn't seem inclined for any trifling. He had recently announced that he intended to "swot," and was now busily engaged in turning over the leaves of his dictionary, and puzzling his little brain to make out a dreadful speech of Queen Dido, which I and others had given up as beyond our capabilities. So the only answer he would make to my blandishments was a nod or a grin, and I am afraid he wished that I wouldn't bother him, though he didn't say so.

Presently he left his seat, and going up to Mr Williamson, said very deferentially :

"Please, sir, would you tell me what *nantes* comes from."

Mr Williamson looked at him for a moment, and then said sharply, but with a twinkle in his eye :

"No! Go to your seat!"

Harry started, and went off in great confusion, which was increased when some of the boys, who saw the joke, began to titter. He didn't understand what they were laughing at, and, like his brother, Harry didn't like to be laughed at. Besides, he thought Mr Williamson was displeased with him for some unknown reason, and fixing his eyes on his book, he looked rather put out.

Then I must needs begin to tease him, by way of cheering him up. Finding that he would not allow me to attract his attention, I borrowed Balbus's knife, and to this end gave him a slight poke with it in the leg, whereupon he jumped up and hit me. I hit back, supposing he was in fun; and then there was a scuffle between us, which grew much more real and vigorous than was safe under the circumstances.

"Hallo! hallo! hallo!" cried Mr Williamson, looking up from his desk. "'Let dogs delight,' et cetera. I say, I say, this will never do! Why are you out of your place, Smith? You must both have an hour's detention; and please, remember that your little hands were made to be caned in school time, and not to tear each other's eyes."

So I had to make off to my proper seat, and the Kangaroo, looking rather annoyed, once more tried to fix his attention on his lesson. Then I began to feel quite miserable at the idea of having got my friend into a scrape, and as I was not likely to have any other opportunity of communicating with him till after school, I wrote a little note, which I thought would put matters

straight, and passed it along to him. But that stupid fellow, Balbus, when it came to his hands, was so long and so stupid in looking over it to see to whom it was directed, that Mr Williamson spied what he was about, and said :

“Cane Secundus, bring that to me.”

I was afraid that I was going to be in for it again, though there was nothing very compromising in the note, which in fact consisted only of these words :

“*Alas, my brother !*”

“*Yours truly,*

“*H. Kangaroo, Esq.*”

“*R. S.*”

But when Mr Williamson had read this epistle, he only laughed, and tore it up, nodding towards me with—

“Very well, Mr Smith. We’ll see about your Virgil. Come up now, boys.”

And you may be sure he took an early opportunity of putting me on, saying, meaningly, that he must see whether I could construe like a man of *letters*.

But as good luck would have it, I went on at a place which I happened to know, and acquitted myself so creditably, that Mr Williamson said :

“Well, your note is torn up, and I won’t take any more *notice* of your writing it in school time. But, for the future, please remember that it isn’t right to *write* notes in school, unless it be notes of what I tell you. Why don’t you laugh when I make puns, boys? If you don’t laugh, I’ll try whether *punishments* will make you cry. Now, then, some other fellow, *ignis via*—fire away! Let us see what you can do, Mr Kangaroo !”

Thus Mr Williamson rattled away in his nonsensical style; but presently his brow clouded over when Harry Kennedy got up and then broke down. For though he had taken twice as much pains to learn his lesson as I had, he chanced to light upon a passage which he did not know, and soon got into a mess with it. Then Mr Williamson, as usual, attacked him with sarcastic jokes, which increased Harry's confusion, and made him flounder into one or two dreadful blunders. He made an accusative singular nominative to a plural verb, and connected a feminine adjective with a tempting masculine that happened to be standing near it, for no apparent reason but to lead unlucky boys astray. When he had blundered thus through two or three lines, the master asked him to parse some words to show that he had tried to make out the meaning, but as Harry had quite lost his head by this time, he again failed utterly, and went down place after place, till, from near the top of the form where he had started, he had fallen almost to the foot. I was next above him when Mr Williamson asked him to conjugate the verb *audeo*.

"*Audeo, audes*," began poor Harry, and stuck there.

"Yes; one word right," said Mr Williamson. "That's encouraging. I never saw such a clever boy as you are, Kennedy!—"

'And still the wonder grew,  
That one small head could carry all he knew!'

come now, give us the perfect."

"I don't remember it, sir," said Kennedy.

Mr Williamson gave him one moment more to think, during which I whispered the answer to him as loud as I dared. But Kennedy, though he must have heard me, wouldn't say it, and down he went again, one place and then another, till he was deposited at the foot of the form.

"Well, this is what happens, you see, to boys who fight in school," said Mr Williamson. "Why do you make a disturbance instead of learning your lesson?"

"Please, sir, it is his nature to," remarked the irrepressible Lessing, as Harry didn't seem inclined to make any reply.

"Be quiet, Lessing! You must stop in two hours, instead of one, Kennedy."

I again accused myself of having got Harry into this scrape, and thought he was offended with me. I supposed this to be the reason why he would not accept my assistance when I prompted him, and felt quite unhappy about it. Several times I tried to telegraph to him signals of my penitence, but he wouldn't raise his eyes from his book. Now we were going to quarrel, and all through my foolishness.

But when I got out of school, there was the Kangaroo waiting to walk home with me to the schoolhouse, and grinning as good-naturedly as ever.

"Oh, I say, Harry, I'm awfully sorry," I began.

"Stuff! Accidents will happen in the best regulated families. But I'm sure I tried to learn that lesson."



"Yes; but I was teasing you, and I thought you were in a wax at me."

"Well, I was a little put out; but I knew it wasn't your fault."

"Didn't you hear me prompting you?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you give the answer, then?"

"Well—well, you know—it isn't fair."

Of course it wasn't. I remembered now that Harry never did accept of this kind of assistance, and felt the greatest admiration for his honesty. The masters had told us that prompting was dishonest, and I had received their statements on the subject with utter indifference; but now that Harry Kennedy said it, I saw that such a practice was mean, and base, and detestable to the last degree. And immediately I was seized with a perfect fury of honour and self-denial, and made up my mind to ask Mr Williamson in the afternoon if he would let Harry off his detention, and allow me to stay in three hours instead.

"Indeed!" said Mr Williamson, drily, when I had made this request. "May I ask what Kennedy has given you to do this. Boys don't ask to be kept in for nothing."

But I looked so hurt at this reply, that he saw at once that his suspicions were unfounded, and seemed sorry for what he had said.

"No, sir, it's not that; but it was my fault that Kennedy didn't learn his lesson, and was punished. I

was teasing him, and would not let him attend ; so it's only fair that I should be punished for him. He doesn't know that I am asking you this."

"Perhaps it was six of the one and half-a-dozen of the other," said Mr Williamson, pulling my ear. "But as you have come and told me all about it, we shall see what we can do for you. I can't let Kennedy off altogether. Of course, he may have done his best to learn his lessons ; but, you know, Smith, we unhappy schoolmasters are obliged to judge by appearances, and if a boy doesn't know his lesson, we can't let him off, because another boy thinks he ought to have known it. However, I dare say the claims of justice will be satisfied if you both stop in an hour ; and the next time you wish to testify your friendship for the Kangaroo, don't tease him in school, and then come to beg him out of a scrape. There now, will that please you ?"

"Oh, thank you, sir !" and off I flew to the Kangaroo, to convey this good news. Stopping in an hour seemed to me no punishment, when he was to stop in too.

So we had each an hour's detention, and spent it revising our Virgil together. But I learned from Harry Kennedy something which was of more value to me than all the *Æneid*—that a boy might be merry and active and winsome, and yet honourable and dutiful in all his dealings with boys and masters alike—that to be happy and to do right were not two different things, but the same.

Ah me ! these pleasant days gone by, when even

troubles could be turned into joy! From afar off I look back to them, and see as it were in a dream the green fields and swelling hedgerows, and rustling woods, and rich lights and shades of autumn afternoons through which we wandered arm in arm with careless and kindly hearts, beneath the pure sunny sky of youth and love. Then again, remembering what I cannot but remember, my thoughts take a solemn tone, and I seem to stand once more in the grey old Minster, its dim loftiness filled with soft rays of the setting sun, and to see him among the white robed choristers, and to hear his voice in the sweet evening hymn, that has ever since been dear to me for his sake. Many sermons have I listened to in these sacred walls, but none of them did so much to win me to God, as the honest words and unselfish deeds of my friend, Harry Kennedy.





## CHAPTER XXI.

### MICHAELMAS.

**A**S the Michaelmas holidays scarcely lasted a week, the boys who lived at any distance seldom left school for such a short time, unless invited by some of their more fortunate companions. Lessing and I accompanied the Kennedys, and made the acquaintance of a large family of younger brothers and sisters, all as jolly and frank as our friends. As for Mrs Kennedy—before I had seen her I somehow felt that Harry's mother must be a good woman, and indeed I think she was the kindest person I ever knew, except, perhaps, my own mother. She was a great invalid, and generally confined to a couch, but I never heard her complain or make a fuss about her ailments, as some invalids do. She seemed not to think of herself, but to be always taken up with trying to make other people happy, and a very happy family she had around her.

How I looked forward to that going home with Harry, and how afraid we were that something might

occur to prevent it ! It happened that Harry had a very bad report that month, and Mr Vialls threatened—though we scarcely supposed that he would dare to carry out such a terrible threat—that he should not be allowed to go home for the holidays if he did not behave better. I don't know that the poor Kangaroo's conduct was so "very bad" as Mr Vialls wanted to make out. He certainly was low in his form all that month, and he got into a row about having a fight with another boy who had ventured to call his mother "Mrs Kangaroo." But his great sin was shooting about peas with a piece of elastic. Mr Vialls discovered him doing this one night after prayers and straightway had him into the study and caned him. Harry was naughty enough to express his satisfaction at the termination of this interview by giving a little skip just as he went out of the room, whereupon Mr Vialls called him back and caned him again by way of teaching him to receive chastisement with becoming gravity. Now, one of the good boys that we read about in story-books, would forthwith have abjured the use of such instruments of evil as peas and elastic ; but Harry was not such a model of obedience. Like the rest of us, he reasoned upon such cases of conscience thus : "I approve of shooting with elastic ; Mr Vialls, for some unknown reason, doesn't. If I like to do it, well and good ; if he can catch me at it and cane me, well and good. But if I choose to do it again and run the risk of the cane, well and good also." So when, as ill-luck would have it, he was next day caught at the same for-

bidden amusement, I don't think Mr Vialls need have thundered at him as if he were a boy of the most depraved nature, or have written home to his father to say that his conduct was "very bad." If I had been Mr Vialls, I think I could have made the Kangaroo put all his illegal artillery into the fire, only it wouldn't have been by caning him.

But I wasn't Mr Vialls, and we sadly feared that he would try to get Harry kept from going home in the Michaelmas holidays. Harry was afraid of this, if he wasn't afraid of the cane, so he began to be painfully good for the few days of school that were remaining, and we persuaded Phillips to go to Mrs Pearson and use his influence with her on our behalf. However, we needn't have distressed ourselves. Nothing more was said about this appalling punishment, and in due time we found ourselves in the railway carriage, as full of boisterous mirth and carelessness as if we were never again to behold the grim faces of the dread Fates that wove the threads of our school life.

Shall I narrate the incidents of this journey?—how we were very nearly forgetting our luggage—how we wanted to ride in the guard's van, and were expelled with contumely and upbraiding—how we made such a noise that no one would come into the carriage with us—how we looked out of the window and howled and waved handkerchiefs whenever we saw any one looking at us—how when we had gone about half-way, Lessing, with his usual love of absurdity, first politely requested and then eagerly entreated the guard to let the train

go back to Whitminster that he might get a bun which he had left half-eaten in the refreshment room—how we struggled and tumbled about for very happiness, till an old lady in the next compartment thought that we were murdering each other, and called out to the engine-driver to stop the train—how at length we came to the little station where Mr Kennedy was waiting with an Irish car to receive us and our belongings—and how, after a drive of five miles, we reached the cosy little parsonage, half hidden in shrubbery, which the Kennedys thought the best spot upon earth.

All the family had come out at the noise of the wheels, and were waiting on the door steps to greet us ; but when we had made their acquaintance, we were too restless to sit still in the house, and George and Harry were eager to show us all the glories of their home. So Lessing and I were led forth, followed by a long train of small brothers and sisters, and introduced to the orchard and the garden, and the pony, and the rabbits, and the dog-kennel, and all the other objects of interest, the little black pigs not being forgotten. Then tea was ready, and it was only when we had eaten as much as we could, and gone out again, and climbed the hill and seen the lovely view, and had a game at rounders on the lawn, and worn ourselves out with laughing and running, that we quieted down a little, and were able soberly to realise that we were thirty miles from Whitminster, and dwelling in an enchanted land wherein no Latin grammar dare show its hateful face.

George Kennedy and Lessing were to sleep in one room, and Harry and I in another. Didn't we promise ourselves lots of fun on the morrow? But we were in no mood to go quietly to bed. After skirmishing about a little in the passage, the Kangaroo and I had retired into our room, when we discovered that a mouse had got behind an old bookcase which filled one side of it, and our venatorial ardour was at once aroused. So Harry ran to his father's study, and fetched out of it two rusty swords, with which we armed ourselves, and taking up our station, one at each end of the bookcase, made furious blows at the unhappy mouse whenever he showed his nose outside. You would have laughed to have seen us in our night-shirts, grasping our deadly weapons with stern determination, and gravely keeping watch for this ferocious animal. We never managed to hit him, and he did not seem to mind us much; but as he kept appearing at intervals of a minute, sometimes at one end and sometimes at the other, he furnished us with exercise and amusement till our candle was burned out, and then we gave him up and got into bed. We lay awake for an hour, having a long, friendly chat, and at length we fell asleep with our arms round each other's necks.

But we were up next morning before most of the household. When first I awoke I could scarcely believe it was true that we were really not at Whitminster, and within hearing of the school bell and Mr Vialls' scolding voice; but it was not a dream. I was not in the great,



bare-looking dormitory, but in Harry's cosy little bedroom. The birds were chirping outside in a great old elm tree that overshadowed that side of the house, and through its leaves, now tinged with autumn brown, the clear morning sunbeams stole to the diamond-framed window and fell upon Harry's sleeping face.

I awoke him, and we jumped up to enjoy the fine morning. We put on our trousers and went out into the orchard to get apples. And now occurred our first encounter with Sarah, the Kennedys' old nurse, who was understood to be very fond of them, and showed it by alternately hugging and scolding them with the extremes of affection and severity. Seeing us leave the house at that early hour, she first addressed us in winged words of reproach, and then locked the door after us, so that, when, scantily attired as we were, we found the autumn air rather chilly, we could not get in again, nor was she to be appeased till Harry threatened to have the rheumatism, when she opened the door fast enough and wanted to give him first a good box on the ear, and then a glass of hot elder wine. We got into bed again and ate our apples, and when they were finished, we went and paid a visit to George and Lessing, who were still snoring. We amused ourselves by pulling off their bed-clothes and making them get up, and then they bolstered us, and we had a comfortable pillow fight till it was time to go to breakfast.

I don't remember all we did that day, but it seems to me as if it were the happiest day in my life. The

Kennedys were all very jolly, and George, who seemed to have pretty much of his own way among his brothers, exerted himself to entertain us. He was most gracious all that day, as became a person of such consideration entertaining guests, and let us tease him and humbug him as much as we liked. At night, when Harry and I put some gorse in his bed, he quite entered into the joke, and came with Lessing into our room to lick us with the greatest good humour in the world. So I hoped that his temper was always "set fair" when he was at home.

But next day the wind had changed. When we went into his room early in the morning to play tricks on him, George shied his boots at us and locked the door, vowing that he would not be disturbed till breakfast time. And when his royal highness did get up, it was on the wrong side of his bed, and several things happened which increased his ill-humour. First of all, Sarah would insist upon calling him "Georgey" before me, and I chaffed him about it. Then I had the misfortune to be present at a consultation of the higher domestic powers concerning the making down of an old coat of Mr Kennedy's into a jacket for one of the boys, which George, for the credit of the family, did not wish me to hear. In the forenoon we went fishing, and George didn't catch anything and wanted to go home, and made himself unpleasant. After dinner, we were going out to drive with Mrs Kennedy, and George and I must needs have a dispute as to which of us

should sit on the box-seat, which, being overheard by his mother, she decided that I, as the stranger, ought certainly to have that valuable privilege ; so George got sulky and wouldn't speak to me. Then, in the evening, we went out upon the lawn, and George had some sweets which he offered to his brother and Lessing, but not to me, and of course I was offended and went to read a book apart from the rest. Harry tried to set matters right by proposing a game at something, but George wouldn't have it, and addressed himself to rigging a boat.

Presently he wanted a knife, and looked up and asked his brother, who was sprawling on the lawn playing with a hobbledohoy foxhound, if he had one. Harry hadn't, and for a moment I thought of offering mine by way of holding out the olive branch, but my silly resentment was too strong for me, so I took my knife out of my pocket to show that I had one, and very ostentatiously pretended to cut the leaves of my book with it and then put it back again ; the meaning of which George understood quite as well as if I told him in plain words that I was highly offended at him.

Very ridiculous all these little details are, but, as I have said before, such is schoolboy life. The next thing that happened was that Harry was stung by a wasp, and went in-doors to get Sarah to apply some of her sovereign medicaments to the place. While he was gone, I called to the dog to come to me, but I soon found his fun so rough that I tried to send him away again, for I had not been accustomed to amusing myself

by letting such an inconsiderate animal snap at my fingers.

"Oh! afraid of a dog!" sneered George Kennedy, calling the brute off, to my great relief.

"I'm not afraid of it!"

"Yes, you are! I don't believe you dare touch a dog so big as this."

"Our dog Carlo at home is twice that size, and I believe you would be afraid of it, if you saw it."

"Pooh! some twopenny-halfpenny terrier that runs away when it sees a rat, I'll bet."

"But it isn't, though!"

"I don't believe it!"

"Well, you needn't, unless you like."

"I don't believe half of what you say. You told us you had a pony, and Caius says you haven't."

"Caius is a donkey. He knows nothing about it. My uncle lends me a pony whenever I like."

"You are always bragging about the things you have at home."

"Am I?"

"Yes, you are!"

"Well, I shan't ask you there, anyhow."

"I wouldn't go, if you did."

I could think of no reply to this argument except a grunt; but presently I returned to the attack.

"It is you that are always bragging. You said you were allowed to have a gun at home."

I had touched a sore point here.

"Well, I was, last year. I often went out rabbiting."

"How many of the dogs did you shoot?" asked Lessing, trying to give a pleasant turn to the conversation, but unconsciously adding fuel to the flame.

"I don't believe it!" said I.

"What! Do you say I tell lies?" cried George, getting up and advancing towards me in a hostile manner.

"Why did you say I told lies, then?" rejoined I, preparing for defence.

"Because you do."

"So do you."

"Take that!"

"Oh, you cad!" cried I, vainly attempting to return his blow.

"You had better call me a cad again, and I'll give you another."

"Well, it is a caddish thing to bully a fellow in your own house," I sobbed, gradually retreating from him.

"If you will have it——"

"Now, shut up, Kennedy," said Lessing, placing himself between us. "If you two don't stop fighting, I shall send for Watts' Hymns and a policeman."

"Well, then, he shouldn't be cheeky."

"And he shouldn't——"

"Oh! yes, I know all about it," said Lessing. "You two are in a wax and don't know what you are saying, that's about the long and short of it. Now if you would just each go into an empty room, and howl, and stamp,

and knock your heads against the wall for about three-quarters of an hour or so, you would get all right again, and be able to listen to my words of wisdom."

I so far followed Lessing's advice that I now beat a retreat from the field of action, and betook myself to Harry's room, where I relieved my angry feelings by a fit of crying, which was only put a stop to by the arrival of the Kangaroo in the character of a comforter and reconciler. Harry allowed me to utter all sorts of abuse and denunciation of his brother till I was tired of it, and then recommended me to wash my face, which bore a visible mark of the blow he had given me.

"I shan't touch it," I replied. "It isn't my fault if it gets black and blue."

"Oh! but if my father comes to know about it, he will be so angry with George."

"Well, I don't care. If your brother bullies me, I don't see why I am to hide it."

"I'm sure George will be awfully sorry about it, when he has cooled down."

"I'm sure he has much need," responded I.

"But, I say, Bob, this is humbug! It will do you no good to get George into a scrape, and it will only make him keep on being angry with you."

"I don't care if he is. I shall never be friends with him again."

"I say, look here! My eye is just as bad as yours. Shall we get some warm water and doctor ourselves together?"

I looked at Harry's face, and noticed for the first time that his eye was swelling very much from the wasp's sting. Though he was trying to cheer me up, he must be in great pain himself, and I felt rather ashamed of my selfishness in making such a work about my own troubles. So I somewhat sulkily consented to his proposal; and Harry fetched some warm water, and we proceeded to the exercise of the art of surgery as known empirically to pugilistic schoolboys. When this was done, I began to feel myself in a slightly happier frame of mind; and the Kangaroo, after artfully talking for a time about other things, ventured once more to draw a vivid picture of his brother's penitence.

"Well, I'm sure I don't want to quarrel with him, but he has been trying to quarrel with me all day."

"He has been in a bad humour all day, but I think he will be all right now. His temper is like a boil—it bursts, and then goes down. I wish you knew, Bob, how sorry George is sometimes when he knows that he has been making a fool of himself."

"He ought to think of that before, then."

"I'm sure he will be sorry now. If you would only go down to him and speak just as if nothing had happened."

"Oh! It isn't my business to make it up. If a fellow chooses to ill-use me, do you think I ought to begin to make friends again?"

So I spoke, but immediately afterwards I was ashamed of myself when I thought how kind and for-

giving Harry was, and how base my sullenness appeared when contrasted with his sunny temper.

"How can any one help feeling angry with a fellow who behaves in that way?" I went on, knowing that I was wrong, and for that reason all the more anxious to justify myself.

We were sitting by the window in the twilight, and Harry looked at me and seemed as if he wished to say something which he found a difficulty in saying. But I believed that I knew what he was thinking as well as if he had uttered the words that were on my lips so often and so thoughtlessly—

*"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us."*

They only speak for themselves who say that boys *never* have such thoughts, and are incapable of being influenced by them.

I sat silent for a minute or two, and Harry looked out of the window. Then I said—

"Let us go down stairs, now. I'll go and offer to help George to rig his boat."

"All right!"

I made another attempt to wash away the traces of the blow, which by-the-bye, had not been a very severe one; and then Harry and I went out of the room arm in arm, and met George coming up the stairs. He looked away when he saw me, and said, in a sullen, constrained tone of voice—

"My mother told me to go and apologise to you."



"Oh ! never mind," said I, making a great effort to be friendly, though it was with difficulty that I could keep from letting my anger rise again at the ungracious way in which this apology was delivered. Nothing more was said, and we all went into the dining-room together, looking somewhat subdued.

But glum looks and sullen thoughts were soon driven away. Lessing had the children arranged before him like a class, and was giving burlesque representations of all the masters at Whitminster, which made us first smile, and then laugh outright. When he proceeded to imitate Mr Williamson getting into a passion, even George screamed with merriment, and he asked me if it wasn't capital and I said it was, and from that moment our complete reconciliation was only a matter of time. Afterwards, we had some charades, and George yielded to my wish, and let me perform the part of the policeman, which he had chosen for himself ; and in short, before we went to bed, we were quite friendly again, and if it hadn't been that we were rather more civil than usual to each other, no one could ever have told that we had had a quarrel.

George was very much annoyed with himself, I believe, when he had time to think over his conduct ; and during the remaining days of visit, I could see that he was taking great pains to keep a guard over his temper and to make up to me for the outburst of which I had been the victim. So the rest of the holidays passed peacefully and pleasantly, and as I said, we en-

joyed our stay extremely, with the exception of this one storm, which left the sky clearer when it had passed away.

But holidays, like other good things, come to an end, and the morning arrived only too soon when the carriage was standing at the door, and our things had been lifted into it, including a goodly hamper, filled—not with books, and the family came crowding to the door to say “good-bye!” Then, old Sarah, who all the morning had been scolding George and Harry as if they were the greatest nuisances on earth, suddenly lifted up her voice and wept bitterly, and expressed her opinion that these two darlings would before long be killed by the severity of the studies to which they were going to be subjected; a prediction that made Lessing and me open the eyes of wonder, knowing as we did the nature of the animals.

We strangers had the delicacy not to accompany the Kennedys when they went into the room where their mother was lying on a couch, to say good-bye to her. When they came out, I saw the tears standing in Harry’s eyes, and he said, by way of excuse for his weakness, as he brushed them away—

“My mother is very often ill, and perhaps we may never see her again.”





## CHAPTER XXII.

### A "REVIEW" HOLIDAY.

**I**T was now well on in autumn, and we had a succession of clear, bright, crisp days that seemed made for running, and jumping, and shouting, and not for fidgeting in close, dusty schoolrooms. Do you remember the wearisomeness of school on such days, and the eager joy with which you were set loose on some welcome holiday, doubly welcome if unexpected? If you do, you will sympathise with us poor fellows, slaving over Virgil and Greek Delectus.

We had not many holidays at Whitminster beyond the regular Wednesday and Saturday afternoons, except on some occasion of public rejoicing, or when news came that one of the old boys had achieved distinction at the University, though, as in these days few boys stayed long enough to go to college, such news came, like angel's visits, few and far between. On saint's days, indeed, we had some relaxation of the ordinary school work, but then we had to learn the Collect, Gospel, and

Epistle for the day, and to attend service at the Minster, which, if I am to tell the truth, rather spoiled the pleasure of what was called a half-holiday. But every month there was a chance of being set free from eleven o'clock, and as it was only a chance, we enjoyed this holiday all the more if we happened to get it. On these occasions, the masters examined each others' forms in their construing, and every form which acquitted itself fairly on the whole was allowed to go, while those that broke down were kept in school all day, sorely against their will, to look over their work. This rule was hard on boys who might do well, and yet lose the holiday through the stupidity or idleness of their class-fellows; but it made us all very much interested in the credit and success of our forms, and for two or three days before these "reviews," as we called them, the top boys might be seen acting as amateur tutors, diligently coaching up the backward ones, in order to avoid the risk of a failure. As a matter of fact, a form was not kept in unless it did very badly indeed; but with true school-boy short-sightedness, we refused to take notice of this, and had an idea that the masters made a point of trying to deprive us of the holiday. This was stupid of us, for we not only might have given them credit for more good-nature, but might have remembered that a master who sentenced a form to be kept in was expected to stay with them. But I think we were of opinion in these days that our masters hated holidays as much as we loved them. One or two of my old companions—

Phillips, for instance—have since become schoolmasters themselves, and know better, if I am not mistaken.

It seems as if it were yesterday, that I see our form undergoing this ordeal of a review. We are getting on fairly ; Mr Vialls is examining us ; he never praises anyone, but he has not begun to scold. Still, we are anxious ; some of our boobies have not been put on, and the dead-weight of their ignorance may turn against us. Ah ! here is one, summoned forth into the lists. Now, gallant Balbus, hold thine own ! Bethink thee, what eager eyes are upon thee, and what fates hang upon thy lips ! But Balbus is sharpening one of his knives on the sly, and has not even got the place, so it is not likely that he will distinguish himself.

“Cane Secundus,” says Mr Vialls, “go on !”

Up jumps Balbus, letting his knife drop one way and his book another, and then goes floundering first after the one and then the other.

“Give me that knife,” says Mr Vialls, frowning ominously. “Now, go on, please. If it is all the same thing to you, we won’t wait longer than we can help.”

Poor Balbus, very red and flurried, is trying to find the place, and can’t, which is no wonder, seeing that, having recovered his book, in his confusion he has opened it upside down. But Lessing hands him his book, pointing out the place, and then, after a little humming and hawing, Balbus gets fairly set agoing.

“*Pius Æneas*,” he begins, plunging desperately into the sentence.

"Well?"

"The pious *Æneas*," translates Balbus.

"Well?"

"*Pius Æneas*—the pious *Æneas*."

"Well, what next?"

"*Pius Æneas*—the pious *Æneas*."

"We have had that three times," cries Mr Vialls, getting impatient. "Go on!"

Balbus makes a great gulp, then pauses, and finally rejoins:

"Please, sir, I don't know any more."

"Why not?" roars Mr Vialls; and poor Balbus, terror-stricken, subsides without answering; and after waiting a minute, Mr Vialls makes a portentous mark in his register, at which our hearts sink within us, and Phillips is called up.

Miss Jemima does not do over and above well, and our fears increase. Mr Vialls gets up and begins to walk about the room, construing the passage as he says it ought to be done, and giving us fine words and phrases which, Lessing whispers, he has got out of a crib. But when the master has got into the middle of his declamation, Balbus, whose wits have just returned to him, suddenly interrupts the proceedings by jumping up, and exclaiming:

"Please, sir, I was absent when that bit was done. I had a sore—"

"Silence! How dare you speak when I am speaking?" exclaims Mr Vialls, in great wrath at having the

thread of his fine oratory broken short. "Stop in an hour for not attending to what was going on, and if you have any excuse to make for your disgraceful ignorance, give it me afterwards in private. I am astonished that Mr Williamson allows his boys to behave in such an impertinent manner."

We give up all hopes now. It is understood in the school that Mr Vialls and Mr Williamson don't like each other over well, and we make up our minds that Mr Vialls will keep us in to spite our master. We look wrathfully at Balbus, the unlucky Jonah who has brought on the storm, and wish that we could cast him overboard to the bottom of the sea. Balbus, conscious of his crime, is suffused as to his large eyes with tears, but he restrains his emotion, and betakes himself for comfort to the contemplation of another knife, with six blades, which he happens to have in his pocket. But Lessing, acting in the interests of the public safety, makes him put this into his pocket, and, by frequent nudges and pinches, exhorts him to attend, in case he should be called upon to perform again, which actually happens before long.

"Now, Cane, I suppose you were not absent all along," says Mr Vialls. "We will give you another chance."

Ben gets up determined to distinguish himself, and does pretty fairly this time, being much aided to the sense of the passage he is translating, by some vivid sketches of the events it narrated, which Lessing had

made on the margin of his book. He was always scribbling, the old Monkey, not only on his own books, but on every one which he could get a hold of. The other day I took up my old Latin Grammar, and found on the title page a drawing of Lessing's, the subject of which is best explained by the following verse written beneath:

"Aspice Kennedy hung on a pole,  
All for having *hunc librum* stole;  
*Si* Kangaroo *reddidisset*,  
Kangaroo *non* hung *fuisse*."

Some of his drawings were really not bad. One, of Æneas and the faithful Achates fighting a duel with Cæsar and Pompey, the latter being attired in cocked hats and swallow-tailed coats, and all four being represented as armed with six-barrelled revolvers, was celebrated among us as a most remarkable work of art. When I revisited the school several years afterwards, I found this picture hanging in one of the studies, and looked upon with great respect as the work of a very Raphael of the olden times. Lessing had great difficulty in learning Latin repetition, and to assist his memory he used to take the trouble of representing each word pictorially on a large sheet of paper. Mr Williamson once got hold of one of these sheets, and I remember how he roared with laughter when he saw a picture of the result of too much pastry on a bilious youth, whom a companion was regarding with astonishment, and exclaiming, "my eye!" this tableau being intended to recall to Lessing's memory two short words which may be familiar to most readers of Virgil.



But where am I getting to? This is what comes of leaving the beaten track of my story, and going off hunting after every will-o'-the-wisp of a reminiscence that comes glimmering over it. Funny old Monkey! It will be a long time before I forget all the good laughs that I have had at your comicalities. But I was talking of Balbus, whom we left undergoing the torture, and hammering out some sort of meaning from poor Virgil's hexameters, so little appreciated by their most frequent readers. Balbus was not like his celebrated namesake; he neither learned many things nor much, and it was hard work for him to get along. Once or twice he stopped altogether, and stamped his foot, and tore his hair, and said, "Oh! do wait a minute, sir; I'll tell you directly," with such a comic look of distress, that Mr Vialls took pity on him, and helped him to stumble along to the end of the sentence. Then one or two more boys, who had not yet read, were put on and did pretty well. Mr Vialls asked a few questions here and there, and shut his book.

Now! Like prisoners in the dock, we sat trembling with anxiety for the verdict which was to set us free or condemn us to imprisonment. Mr Vialls looked over the marks in his register for a much longer time than seemed necessary to us. We thought he took a pleasure in keeping us in suspense.

"I can't say that this form has done well," he began, at length, and our faces fell. "Indeed, I may say that some boys have done execrably badly." (Balbus,

Phillips, and one or two others tried to look indifferent, and succeeded in looking unhappy.) "Of course, you know that it is the rule of the school that the whole form shall suffer for the shortcomings of its members" (we were plunged in despair), "and I am not sure that I ought not to keep you all in;" (a gleam of hope), "but" (how cruel it was of him to make a provoking pause and look round as if enjoying our suspense!) "I think I shall let you pass muster for this once. You may go!"

"Hurrah!" shouted George Kennedy, springing from his seat.

"Silence!" cried Mr Vials, all his dignity bristling up at this demonstration of joy. "How dare you behave so in my presence? I have a good mind to keep you in after all. Don't let such a thing happen again!"

George looked abashed before the frown of the offended magnate, and left the room with the rest of us as quiet as a mouse; but as soon as he got outside of the door, he turned and indulged in a lively pantomime expressive of anything but respect and esteem for Mr Vials. Then out we rushed into the play-ground, where we gave expression to our delight without restraint.

Now came the question, what were we to do for the rest of the day. We might go where we pleased in parties, after giving our names to a prefect, and were not required to be back till six o'clock. Mrs Bramble was authorised to provide each of us with some sandwiches and threepence to buy "ops," as we called it. I shall leave my readers to imagine what "ops" meant, merely

desiring them to observe that we were accomplished Greek scholars. If any further hint is necessary, I may say that this said "ops" consisted for the most part of apples and gingerbread.

I joined a party who professed to be going out fishing. I say professed, for among us only Ben Cane and Phillips could boast of rods ; but let boys loose into the country, and fishing is as good an excuse as any other. No fear of our not being able to amuse ourselves. We merrily made our way towards a part of the river where Phillips declared that he had beheld finny monsters of the deep, and to which he undertook to conduct us. After a time we grew tired of the highroad, and started across country, vowing to go straight as an arrow, and leap everything that came in our way. On we went, over the stubble fields and short hedges, which everybody jumped except Balbus, who preferred to push his unwieldy form through them, and each time left a gap that Lessing declared was big enough to let a prize pig through. At length we came to a widish drain, which made most of us pull up and look doubtful. But the Kangaroo rushed on and cleared it with a bound. I got over it next, lighting in soft mud up to the ankles. Then the rest followed, one way or other, with various success, all except Phillips, who funked it, and after two or three vain attempts, announced, in spite of our jeers and exhortations, that he couldn't do it, and was prepared to be abandoned. But we would not allow Miss Jemima to become a second Dido, so Balbus and Lessing jumped

back again, and taking him up bodily, swung him across into our arms, which being achieved, we resumed our journey, all more or less wet and muddy, but not a bit the less happy and noisy for that.

But now we discovered that we had not come in the direction we had intended, and that the river was nowhere to be seen. So, as we were blown with running, we held a council of war, and our first proceeding was to set to work and eat up all our provisions, though it was not an hour since we had left home. To give a decided air of romance to our banquet, we lit a small fire of dry sticks, and roasted some potatoes, which we ate with great relish, though the best cooked of them were more than half burned. This important part of the day's proceedings being got over, we took an observation, and discovered that we were close to a good-sized pond. So Balbus and Jemima set to work fishing in it, while the rest of us dispersed ourselves in a thicket hard by, to look out for nuts and blackberries, every now and then sallying forth to chaff the two disciples of Izaak Walton about the patience with which they watched their floats in vain.

At length, however, Balbus got a bite, and thereupon he made row enough to be heard half-a-mile off, and we all came running up to see the sport. There was old Balbus standing on a plank that spanned a small stream running into the pond, and struggling to pull up something which beyond doubt was at the end of his line.

"Oh! I've got such a big fish! I believe it's a pike!"

"I believe it's your grandmother," said his brother. "It's much more likely to be a half-starved minnow. But what are you letting all your line out for, you donkey? Pull him up!"

"I shall in a minute. Look out, Phillips! Are you ready?"

"All right," cried Phillips, who was standing on the bank prepared for a desperate struggle with the king of all the whales, if need were.

"Here goes!" shouted Ben, and with a jerk lugged up a large eel, which flopped his tail into Phillips' face, and sent him sprawling on the bank; while at the same time the lucky fisherman overbalanced himself, and went head-over-heels into the stream beneath. There was more mud than water in it, and he floundered about in a most ridiculous way, till we, screaming with laughter, picked him out not much the worse, except as far as appearance went, for he was covered with mud from head to foot. Balbus was ready to join in the laugh at his own mischance; but Miss Jemima was discovered to be in a state of wrath at what he considered to be the awkwardness of his brother fisherman, and it was some time before he could be appeased. In the meanwhile, the eel, which had been the cause of all this commotion, had managed to wriggle into the water, and as the line had been broken by the jerk, succeeded in making his way back to his bereaved family, to whom he, without doubt, exhibited the hook in his stomach as a warning against greediness.

At all events, none of them would bite, if, indeed, this was not a hermit-eel, dwelling by himself in a secluded bunch of weeds, and meditating over the follies of his kind. It was in vain that Phillips put on three worms at once, and lashed the water desperately enough to frighten any fish which might dwell therein out of their senses. Balbus was eager to try again, but his brother Tom, seeing that there was a chance of catching something, persuaded him that he must run about to dry his clothes, and that he himself had better have the rod now. Master Tom was rather too good a hand at coming over his brother in this way, and, as usual, good-natured easy-going Ben yielded to him, and retiring to the wood, sought comfort in trying all the knives he had in his pocket upon the trees—he had only three with him that day, for Mr Vialls had taken one away, and he had lent one to George Kennedy.

But when Tom had fished for ten minutes without catching anything, he grew impatient, and beholding two or three ducks which were swimming about the pond, was seized with a bright idea.

“Oh, I say!” he cried to Phillips, “let us see if these brutes will take our bait,” and he threw his line towards them.

Phillips did so also, and presently one of the ducks snapped at his bait and swallowed it. Miss Jemima and Cane immediately began to pull in the line, the alarmed bird flapping its wings and gurgling in its throat in a piteous way, which only made us laugh.

I wish to speak as well as I can of boys, but I must say that they are too often abominably wanting in humanity towards animals. Only one voice was raised in the poor duck's behalf, and that was Harry Kennedy's.

"I say, Caius, don't ; it's a shame !"

They wouldn't pay any attention to him, but their cruel amusement was none the less brought to an end. For just then there appeared on the other side of the pond a sturdy-looking bucolic individual, shaking his fists, and uttering most dreadful threats of vengeance. We at once concluded him to be the owner of the duck, and lost no time in making off, and you will not be surprised to hear that those who had been most forward in torturing a harmless, helpless animal were not the most backward in getting out of the way when this stronger enemy was to be dealt with. We ran as hard as we could, and the farmer followed us for a little, but soon gave up the chase, and contented himself by making threatening gestures and breaking the fishing-rods, which we had left behind us in the hurry of our flight.

"Well," said Lessing, as we stopped, all hot and panting, and looked back at our baffled pursuer, "he has managed to spoil the rods, though he was obliged to spare the children.

"It was a new one !" mourned Balbus, casting a look of reproach on his brother.

"Well, it can't be helped, so there's no use making a fuss about it," said Tom.

*"Caius sui fratris fishing-rodum minimi æstimat,"*  
quoted Lessing.

"Yes—it's all very well for you fellows to humbug, but it cost me three-and-sixpence."

"I think we had better be off, or we shall have this fellow after us again," suggested Phillips.

"Well, I'm agreeable; and, look here, Balbus, you are not to show the way to the husbandman this time," said Lessing. "What time is it, some fellow?"

Nobody had a watch with him except Balbus, and he pronounced it to be a quarter-past five o'clock.

"Oh, I say! I never thought it was so late. How the time has flown! We must look sharp, or we shan't be home by six."

So off we went at a run, and before long came upon the river, which brought us to a check. While we were consulting where was the nearest bridge, we heard the Minster clock at Whitminster strike three.

"Why, Balbus, I thought you said it was a quarter-past five."

"So it is, by my watch. Oh! by-the-bye, though, I forgot. My watch is about two hours and a-half too fast—at least, I know it was either two hours and a-half too fast, or two hours and a-half too slow, yesterday."

"What a donkey, you are, Balbus! Well, if it's only three o'clock, we have lots of time. I say, shall we bathe? It isn't too cold, and we can run on the bank to dry ourselves."



"*Totum rectum*," said Lessing, who proceeded to stand on his head, and then politely requested the Kangaroo to take off his boots.

This proposal met with favour. October afternoons are not particularly warm, but schoolboys don't pay much regard to the seasons, and after sitting for a little on the bank, we began to undress.

In the meantime, let me digress to relate the sad fortunes of Balbus' watch. As we have seen, it was not a very accurate timekeeper, and this was little wonder to any one who knew how its owner treated it. To begin with, he put it to purposes for which watches are not generally supposed to be designed. I have seen him and the Kangaroo amusing themselves in school by racing their watches against each other, the hands being previously set to the same time, and the regulators pushed as far as they would go towards "fast." When his watch was beaten in an encounter of this sort, or otherwise failed to give satisfaction to him, Balbus was in the habit of admonishing it by knocking it against a form. Finding this harsh treatment fail, I suppose he thought it necessary to try kindness, and I remember assisting at the ceremony of putting treacle into the works of it, the results of which experiment were not encouraging. Naturally Balbus' watch got into bad habits, and the story was that, in a fit of extreme disgust with its performances, he put it into a saucepan and boiled it. Then he tried a little amateur tinkering at the works, which ended as might have been

expected, and finally he sold it in a somewhat dilapidated state to Abbing for a ten bladed knife, a paint box, and a lot of silkworms.

I may seem to have too many of these digressions, but the fact is that I must spin out this chapter, as I am afraid I shall have to omit the part containing the story about Mr Vialls smelling the roast goose in our dormitory, and not being able to find it out, which is so true that every one will say it could never have happened.

But to return. We had just got into the water and were splashing about and trying to persuade ourselves that it was not very cold, when, to our horror and amazement, our friend—I mean, our enemy—the farmer appeared on the bank armed with a large horsewhip. Only Balbus was still on land, not quite undressed yet, and he, warned by a shout of “cave!” made haste to spring into the water with his boots on, though he was too late to escape a cut from the farmer’s whip, which made him howl vehemently. And now we were in a mess!

“Are you young scamps just going to come out of that?” inquired the farmer, standing on the bank and flicking ominously with his whip.

“What do you want?” we ventured to inquire.

“What do I want? I want to show you that I am not going to have my ducks killed and my fences broken; that’s what I want! Come out and I’ll show you what I want, fast enough! Come along!”

"Well, I think upon the whole we had rather not," said Lessing, *sotto voce*; but we were not much in the mood for joking. The water was beginning to get unbearably cold; we knew that we could not stay in much longer; and here was this wrathful rustic mounting guard over our clothes!

As we did not, however, seem inclined to accept his invitation, he proceeded to gather all our garments into a heap, and seemed as if he were going to walk off with them. This would never do.

"I say, if we catch cold and die of scarlet fever, you'll be hung, you know!" cried Lessing.

"My father is a magistrate, and I shall tell him about you," said Phillips, looking as dignified as a naked little boy shivering in two feet of water could do.

The farmer only replied to these threats by a hoarse laugh; but he seemed to change his mind, for he put down our clothes, and after waiting a minute longer, walked out of the field.

We lost no time in getting on the bank, and, rushing to the heap of clothes, huddled on whatever garments we first got hold of, without waiting to see that they were our own. I got Balbus' trousers, which were a mile too big for me, and the great Ben put on Phillips' jacket, from the sleeves of which his fat arms protruded for at least half-a-foot; but there was no time to set these mistakes right. We had a suspicion that our foe was only waiting behind the hedge, and were anxious

to get away as fast as possible. Nor were we wrong; for no sooner had we started off, than the farmer appeared once more from the other side of the field, and hurried on in vigorous pursuit.

Away we went like the wind, in a great fright. At least I was, I know; for as Balbus' trousers fell over my heels and impeded my progress, I soon found myself last of the lot, and expected every moment to feel the farmer's whip come cracking over my back. But when we had crossed two fields, finding myself still safe from his clutches, I ventured to look back, and to my great relief saw that we were gaining on the old fellow, who was somewhat fat, and seemed to find running harder work than he had bargained for. I took courage and put on a spurt; but while I was still looking behind me, I tripped over a stone, and fell sprawling on the ground. I tried to get up, but found that I had hurt my foot, and could not run any further. This was what came of not looking where I was going.

Harry Kennedy heard me cry out: he looked round, stopped, and came back to me. Then in a minute the foe was upon us, hot, wrathful, inexorable, panting.

"Now, then!" he cried, taking a firm hold of his whip.

"Don't!" exclaimed Harry, throwing himself before me. "This fellow has hurt himself."

"I believe I have sprained my ankle; I can't move."

"Serve you right, if you have! What business have you to come meddling with my ducks and my fences?"

"I didn't touch your ducks," said I.

"Oh, yes! It was one of your lot, and you are all birds of a feather, I reckon. I have a good mind to give you both a thundering good tanning, and that'll teach you to come about my place again with your mischievous tricks. Anyhow, you'll go home with me, till I have time to take you back into the town. Where do you live? If you tell me a lie, I'll half murder you."

Harry told him.

"Oh! you are Dr Pearson's lads, are you? More shame to him for not looking better after you. Well, I'll leave it to him to thrash you, for that ought to be more in his line than mine. Now, you get up and come with me."

"But he can't walk," said Harry, pointing to me.

"Stuff! It's just shamming. I'll make him jump precious soon, as you are so fond of jumping," said the farmer, cracking his whip.

Urged by this threat, I made a shift to get up and hobble along, though my foot pained me so that I could scarcely keep from crying. But Harry Kennedy let me lean upon him, and I felt that I could bear anything as long as he was with me, so we made our way slowly to the farm-house, which was luckily quite close at hand.

In spite of the pain I was suffering, I could scarcely help laughing to see what had escaped the notice of the farmer, namely, that old Balbus was stuck fast in a hedge close by, and, not daring to move while this conversation was going on, had remained there in a state of great alarm till we moved off, when he tumbled out with a great

crash, and lumbered away to rejoin our companions, who by this time had halted on the top of a small elevation, and were waiting to see what would become of us.

When we got to the farm, our captor locked us up in a shed full of apples, intimating that if we touched one of them, he would break every bone in our bodies. This threat was not necessary, for we were in no mood to enjoy apples, even if we had been disposed to take them. The pain of my foot was increasing every minute, and I began to feel sick and faint. But no nurse could have been kinder to me than Harry Kennedy. He gently removed my boot, and cut away my stocking, and we found that my ankle was much swollen. The old farmer, looking in after half-an-hour to see that we were safe, could not assert that I was shamming now, and with a grunt he said he would send some one to look at the sprain. Presently appeared a red-cheeked girl, whom we found to be his daughter, and she proved a very ministering angel. She not only bathed my foot in hot water, and bound it up cleverly with strips of linen, but she brought us a cup of milk each and a slice of bread and treacle. Seeing that she seemed inclined to sympathise with us, we consulted her as to whether her father might not be appeased, and induced to let us go home in time for tea, but she shook her head at this.

"Father *is* cross," she said. "He's having his tea, just now, and then he'll have his pipe, and after that, he says, he's going to take you back to your school."

But soon she came back again under some pretence

or other, and very broadly hinted that as her father had not thought necessary to lock the door on his second visit, and as there was no one about the yard, we might as well take the opportunity of making off. But I could scarcely put my foot to the ground, and Harry said he would not leave me, so we had no choice but to stay, and await our fate with as much equanimity as possible. We sat down on the apple heaps and chatted, and then, at Harry's suggestion, we attempted to drive away care by playing at bowls with the roundest and hardest apples we could find.

When we had been engaged in this occupation for some time, we heard a voice which we knew, outside, engaged in dialogue with the ogre into whose hands we had fallen.

"I tell you my father is a magistrate, and I shall let him know about you."

"If he's a magistrate, he ought to have taught you not to go about damaging other people's property."

"Well, if you won't let them go, you must give me back the three-and-sixpence, at least."

"Must I? That'll just pay for the duck, my lad. Here your friends are, and you'll go in beside them, till I'm ready to take you all into Whitminster."

"But I'm an ambassador. You have no right to keep me. It isn't fair."

"You an ambassador! You're a young scamp that broke my fences; and I'll show you whether you have a right to do that. Get in with you!"

Then the door of the shed was opened, and Phillips came flying in, impelled from behind with a vigorous kick, and we heard the key turned in the lock again.

Miss Jemima was in a great state of excitement at this unceremonious treatment, and made some remarks not very complimentary to the farmer, which, if they had been heard by that worthy, would doubtless have led to a still rougher handling of his ambassadorial person. When he had calmed down a little, he explained to us how he came to be there. Our companions, after beholding us consigned to durance vile, from a safe distance, had raised three-and-sixpence among them, and drawn lots to determine who should go and offer this enormous sum by way of ransom to our captor. The lot had fallen upon Phillips, and he had foolishly commenced the negotiation by producing the three-and-sixpence, and handing it over before stipulating for our release. The rest we had heard.

"This fellow will get into a scrape," declared Jemima. "Tom Cane says that we can have him up for assault and false imprisonment, and I'm sure my father will make a row about this."

"I think if any one is in a scrape it is us," said the Kangaroo. "He can have us up for breaking his fences."

"I don't care. I'm not going to be treated this way by a cad," grumbled Phillips; but when he saw how my ankle was swollen, he forgot his own woes, and addressed himself to sympathise with me.



At length we were released from our captivity by the farmer, who made us get into a cart with him, and drove off towards Whitminster.

There was no chance of our being home in time now. The shades of evening were coming on, and the air was chilly. We began to feel depressed, and to think of Mr Vialls.

"I say, what will be done to us?"

"Swish," said Phillips, mournfully. "And perhaps we shall be confined to bounds for a month."

"I wish you had left that duck alone, Phillips. It was all your fault."

"Well, I'll tell Vialls, if you like. I don't want to get you into a scrape," said Phillips, but not very confidently. "It wasn't all my fault, though. It was Caius who proposed to catch the duck, and then it was Balbus who broke the fences."

"I don't know that it was anybody's fault more than another's," said the Kangaroo. "I suppose we are all in for it. I only hope we shan't have a thousand lines. I do hate impositions."

"I hope we shan't be caned," said Phillips. "It's all very well for you fellows, but you can't think how it hurts me. My back is so thin. All our family are very thin, and my father said I was not to be licked at school if they could help it. I have heard that my great grandfather was killed by being licked when he was a small boy."

On another occasion, when Phillips treated us to this

remarkable family tradition, Lessing gravely capped it by declaring that all his ancestors were drowned together when they were crossing a river ; but this time we were not in a mood to be facetious. I was considering whether Mr Vialls would consider that a sprained ankle might stand in lieu of a caning.

Our friend the farmer sat silent, smoking his pipe, and we supposed that he was not listening to our conversation. But I think he must have heard Phillips' mournful forebodings, and been moved to pity, for when we had come within a hundred yards of the school-house, he pulled up abruptly, and said to us—

“ See here, now, I was thinking of fetching you to your master to have you well thrashed, but I can't say as that I'm very big o' the job. If I let you go, will you promise to leave my fences and my ducks alone after this.”

We assured him that for the future his fences and his ducks would be sacred in our eyes, and then he bundled us out, and drove off without further delay, only turning round to bellow out—

“ Tell them other fellows, that if I ever catch them near my place again, I'll——”

The rest of this awful threat was lost so far as our ears were concerned, and we proceeded to make the best of our way home, Harry and Phillips supporting me on each side, for I was now scarcely able to walk.

At first, we felt much relieved at being released from the custody of the farmer ; but on second thoughts, we

were not so sure that we ought to congratulate ourselves. Our friends would at least have told the story for us, and now we should most likely have the unpleasant task of confessing, for our absence beyond the proper hour was certain to have been discovered; and none of us three suggested explaining it by a lie. So it was not without reason that we sneaked up to the house, not feeling at all sure about how to present ourselves.

But to our astonishment we found the doors open, and not a soul in the schoolroom. Harry ran up stairs to the studies and dormitories, but they too were empty. The house, usually so noisy, was turned into a palace of the Sleeping Beauty. There were signs of sudden flight. Open books were lying scattered about the room, and one or two benches had been overturned. In the dining-hall the tea things were laid out as usual, but not a cup or plate had been used. What could have happened? Phillips proposed to go and find Mrs Pearson, but we exhorted him not to go near that part of the house lest she should take to asking him inconvenient questions. But he penetrated into kitchen regions, and succeeded in waylaying Betsy Tertius, one of the maids, who was to be trusted not to betray us, and from whom he succeeded in obtaining the information we wanted. I ought to say here that we boys called all the maids at the schoolhouse Betsy, distinguishing them from each other with a contemptuous disregard of the rules of gender, by the numerical adjectives *primus*, *secundus*, *tertius*, and so forth.

Well, here is the story, as we learned it first from Betsy, and then more fully from the other boys, who presently arrived upon the scene, with great hubbub and excitement.

Mr Bentley's form had been kept in all afternoon by Mr Williamson, and that gentleman, weary of hearing them bungle over their Delectus, had gone away, locking the door of the great schoolroom, and leaving them in it to their own devices. It is not hard to guess that they did not trouble themselves much with Delectus, but began to romp about the room, and to explore in all directions. Having made a vain attempt to open Mr Vialls' desk, and get at his cane, with the view of putting a horse-hair in it, some mischief was, nevertheless, not wanting for their idle hands to do. Three or four of them discovered that the door of a staircase leading into the crypt beneath had been left unlocked, and forthwith proceeded to descend, lighting their way with some wax matches which Wood had in his pocket. In these subterranean regions there was very little to be seen but dust and rubbish; but while they were larking about, they managed in some way or other which was never quite explained, to drop a match into a bundle of old papers, and set fire to it. Then, like little donkeys, instead of crushing out the flame at once, they rushed pell-mell from the crypt, tumbled up the stairs, and appeared in the schoolroom, announcing that the whole place was on fire. The other boys got frightened, too; the outside door was locked, so they ran to the windows

and howled out "Fire" as loud as they could. Presently they had a crowd of people assembling round the Grammar School, and the fire-engines arrived; and the police, unable to find the key, burst the door open, and everything was confusion and excitement. A messenger had been sent to the schoolhouse; he arrived just as the boys were going to sit down to tea, and the whole lot, with Mr Vials at their head, came racing down to the scene of the conflagration, as the Whitminster *Mercury* called it next week.

Luckily, "the conflagration" was confined to the heap of old copy-books and examination-papers in which it first broke out, and the only damage done to the school was by the water with which the firemen, in their zeal, flooded half the rooms in the school. The public was quite disappointed. No one outside the building had so much as seen a wreath of smoke; and the only evidence of a fire was a heap of charred ashes, which could be carried away in a bucket.

Mr Williamson was dreadfully annoyed with himself when he found what had been the result of his leaving the school for a little; and the boys who had caused all this trouble were not long of being led out to execution, I can promise you. But it's an ill wind that blows nobody good. In the commotion, our absence had not been noticed by Mr Vials or any of the prefects, and no particular questions were asked as to how I came by my sprain. So our spirits rose, and we demeaned ourselves as became the heroes of a stirring adventure. I,

especially, felt myself a person of consideration, not only in right of my sprained ankle, but because I had a tale to tell concerning my cousin Tom and the phosphorus, which, under the circumstances, was peculiarly interesting, and gave me a right to take a large share in the conversation. So, instead of spending the evening scribbling lines or smarting from stripes, as we had expected, we rested safe in Ithaca, all our troubles and dangers being overpast.

Not all. My ankle turned out to be rather badly sprained, and confined me to the sick-room, till I was heartily tired of it. Mr Vialls made me learn my lessons just as if I were attending school ; so I had all the work and none of the play. I had scarcely any companions in the sick-room, for that was not a time of year when it was fashionable among the boarders to be ill of anything. Plums had gone out of season ; apples were no longer green ; sore throats had not yet come in ; so I had no invalids to keep me company except now and then a trumpery toothache or headache, the sufferer from which was generally too depressed to be entertaining. I had Ben Cane, to be sure, for two or three days. He had come to grief in an odd manner. Some of the fellows were making squibs by way of preparation for the fifth of November, and Balbus thought he would like to try what would happen if he poured some powder out of a paper on the flame of a candle. The result rather astonished him. It is a wonder that he was not more severely hurt ; and as it

was, his eyebrows and half his hair were singed off, and his face and hands so badly burned, that he had to go into the sick room. But after a little I found him rather a dull companion, especially, as not being able to sharpen and handle his collection of knives on account of his injured hand, he became low-spirited, and got me to write mournful letters to his mother, hinting at a cake and several pots of gooseberry jam as the only medicine which could minister unto his mind diseased.

Then it was that one found the advantage of having a friend, and Harry Kennedy showed himself a real friend to me. George, and Lessing, and Phillips, and other fellows, came to see me sometimes when they had nothing better to do, but Harry would leave his games and sit in the dull sick-room as often and as long as I liked, to chat with me, and tell me the news of the school: how Lessing was top of our form; how Tom Cane had got swish for daring another boy to whistle in Mr Bentley's class; how Sargent had had a fight with the Grunter, and defeated him with great loss; how the boys all said that the new Mayor had promised to ask often for holidays for us; how a small magazine of squibs and fusees had gone off in Wilkinson's pocket in school time; and so forth, and so forth.

Dear old Harry! I should mind no pain or weariness if I could only have you sitting again by my side.

One day I was wishing that I had money enough to buy a volume of *Punch*, which we had seen in a book-

seller's window, and which I thought would help me to wile away some of the hours that hung so heavily on my hands. Our school library had not yet been established by Mr Dalton. That same evening Harry brought me the book. I knew he must have spent nearly all the money he had upon it.

I have that book now among my greatest treasures, but it is not for the sake of Mr Punch's wit that I preserve it so carefully. On the fly-leaf, half hidden by a nonsensical drawing of Lessing's, there is written in a boyish hand :

*" To R. Smith,*

*from*

*H. Kangaroo."*

When I look at these faded letters, I have certain feelings which my readers may or may not understand.







## CHAPTER XXIII.

### KENNEDY PRIMUS.

**I**N due time, I went back to school, and nothing of any importance disturbed the even tenor of my life for some weeks. I got on with my lessons fairly—well enough not to have bad reports sent to my father, at least, and I only got into a small scrape now and then. I became a greater favourite among the other boys, and that pleased me more than the good opinion of the masters. Harry Kennedy and I were always together. I kept on pretty good terms with his hot-headed brother, though before Christmas we had one quarrel, which neither of us will ever forget. The only one of his friends George didn't quarrel with was Lessing, and that was because it takes two to make a quarrel, and Lessing would never be one. If George was crusty, the Monkey only laughed at him, and drew a caricature of him, or sent him some absurd scrawl, such as this :

*"Care Kangaroo Prime, Fabulam tibi dicam quod te ridere faciebit.*

*Quondam vixit puer qui iracundissimus erat et in waxum magnissimum gettere solebat. Hic puer crux factus est in me, nominaque mala me appellavit, et mecum in pugna certare voluit. Sed ei dixi parvas manus suas non factas esse ut cujusquam oculos scratcherent. Fertur Balbum praelio interfuisse; Lessing autem non fuit sic stultus. Igitur quum iste suam caudam flourishavit et 'Veni,' clamitavit; 'Kangaroos bellicosus sum et te lickere possum,' ego respondi pacem me maximi astimare, et meum baculum cecidi. Ego sum,*

*Tuus non iracunde,*

"SIMIA MAXIMUS."

We thought this much finer Latin than Virgil's.

One day George Kennedy got hold of Ben Cane's essay when he was not looking, and being in a mischievous mood, he ornamented the end of it with a design after this fashion :



*"Balbus recepit se confecturum esse negotium."*

Then he folded up the paper again, and slipped it back among Cane's books without that young man knowing anything about it.

Generally Mr Williamson would have laughed at such a joke, but on this occasion he happened to be rather out of temper. He had just commenced the lesson, when a great mewling and scratching was heard in a cupboard used for keeping books and stationery, and upon investigation he discovered that he had forgotten to lock the door of this cupboard, and that some naughty boy had shut up a very vigorous young kitten in it. We all screamed with laughter, and when the kitten was let out, rushed from our seats and chased it round the room, making as much noise as we could. Mr Williamson got angry, and ordered us to our seats on pain of being punished all round, so at length quiet was restored, and the intruder turned out. But when the master asked who had played this trick, nobody volunteered any information. We all knew that it was done by two of Mr Vialls' boys, but of course we wouldn't tell, and Mr Williamson was annoyed about it. So when he opened Ben Cane's essay, and saw Kennedy's handiwork, he frowned, and called up Balbus for judgment.

"What do you mean by scribbling this nonsense at the end of your essay?"

Balbus opened his eyes wide with the most amusing look of bewilderment, and gasped out—

"Please, sir,—I didn't do it."

"Who did, then?"

Kennedy stood up, trying not to laugh, and making a desperate effort to get rid of a huge lump of toffee, with which he had just filled his mouth.

"You did! What did you mean by it?" snapped Mr Williamson.

Kennedy gave no answer, partly because he didn't know what to say, and partly because he couldn't speak by reason of the toffee.

"Answer me, and don't stand there looking like a fool. Why don't you answer me, when I speak to you?"

Some of us who saw the state of the case began to laugh, and Mr Williamson got furious.

"I'll teach you to air your impertinence on me," he cried, in a strong Irish accent, which always came out when he was excited. "Answer me at once."

"I couldn't, sir," said Kennedy, succeeding at length in disposing of the toffee. "I had something in my mouth."

"Oh, I see! eating sweets and drawing silly pictures on other boys' exercises, that's what you come to school for, is it? Baby! have you brought your pinafore with you? Shall I send to the nurse for Master George's pap?"

Kennedy didn't approve of this kind of rebuke, and began to look indignant.

"Well, if you behave like a baby, you must be treated like a baby. Go and stand in the corner."

Very unwillingly Kennedy did as he was told. He did not care much about ordinary punishments, but he could not bear being disgraced in this way. He was obliged to obey, though; and, with red cheeks and down-cast eyes, was kept standing in the corner for about ten

minutes, at the end of which Mr Williamson told him to take his seat. He did so in an angry, defiant way, and would not raise his eyes from his book all the morning.

Generally when Kennedy was offended he had forgotten all about it in an hour, but this time his resentment lasted longer than usual. He was extremely annoyed at having been put to shame before the other boys, and felt very bitter against Mr Williamson. The master saw his state of mind, and thought he would make it all right by asking him to have a game at fives after school; but Kennedy refused as uncivilly as he durst, and walked away with a look of injured innocence that was intended to reproach Mr Williamson's conscience. This was a bold thing to do, for a master's invitations were like the Queen's, rather of the nature of commands. Generally we were only too well pleased to play fives with a master, not only for the honour of the thing, but because we generally got a new ball by it.

I did not know how much Kennedy had felt this ridiculous affair, and most unluckily I ventured to touch on the subject that evening when I was in his study with two or three other fellows. One of these boys, who wasn't in Mr Williamson's form, asked what I was talking about, and I told them the story.

"Well, I think we have heard enough about that," said Kennedy, crossly. "Can't you hold your tongue about it?"

"All right! Only, I can't help laughing to think how

you looked at Williamson, as if you would like to eat him. You *were* in a wax."

"No, I wasn't."

"Oh! oh! ask any of the other fellows."

"Well, if I did, that's better ~~than~~ looking frightened, like a beaten dog, as you do, whenever Williamson pitches into you."

"I don't!"

"Yes, you do."

"I'm sure I don't."

"But I'm sure you do."

"Oh, of course you like to contradict! I never saw such a fellow for contradicting as you are, Kennedy."

"As yourself, you mean. Who's getting into a wax now?"

"I'm not. You are, I think."

"Am I?"

"Well, we needn't quarrel about it."

"Who wants to quarrel?"

"You do."

"I don't. You are trying to do it as hard as you can."

"You began."

"No, it was you."

"It wasn't. But of course you'll contradict me. I never saw such a bad-tempered fellow as you are."

"Did you ever look in a looking-glass?"

"Every one knows how fond you are of quarrelling."

"I know that I have a good mind to give you a licking."

"To show that you haven't lost your temper, I suppose."

"Look here, Smith. Will you just walk out of my study, or shall I have to kick you? I won't put up with your cheek any longer."

"All right! I don't want to stop in your study if you are so cross and nasty," said I, holding the door open.

"Well, cut, can't you! and don't stand there, looking like a fool."

"Don't excite yourself, Kennedy. You look just as you did when you were put in the corner."

Kennedy snatched up a book to throw at me, but I dashed out, banged the door after me, and walked away whistling.

Here was a pretty quarrel!

Next morning Kennedy's resentment against Mr Williamson still continued, and he found some boys to encourage him in it. It was our opinion that our master had been too severe of late, and there was a good deal of dissatisfaction in the form. So several of us received with delight an idea which somebody proposed. It was nothing more than this, that we should agree not to laugh at any of the jokes and stories with which Mr Williamson was in the habit of enlivening our studies. This, it was considered, would "take him down a peg."

Kennedy was at the head of the conspiracy, which several of the boys joined of their own accord. Those

who didn't seem inclined to do so, he threatened to thrash if they didn't look as grave as judges all the morning.

So when Mr Williamson began to be jovial, he found his efforts received with icy coldness. It was in vain he told us the story of the Irish apple-woman and her donkey; in vain that he called us by our nicknames, and made puns on such names as Cane and Winter. We had heard them before, and now listened to them unmoved, or at best with nothing more than a polite perfunctory smile. Mr Williamson was annoyed, and couldn't make it out.

But you can't expect thirty boys to keep grave for more than half-an-hour together, so before long the master waxed furiously comic. He succeeded in thawing us to some extent; first one grinned and then another. Then most of us couldn't help tittering at something in spite of the look of disdain which Kennedy cast on the traitors to the cause; and at length we all burst into uncontrollable laughter when Mr Williamson read out Lessing's essay. The subject was "Bear and Forbear," and this is what that madcap, Lessing, had written:

"The subject naturally divides itself into two heads. First, the character and disposition of the bear; second, the food for the bear. The bear is a gentle and graceful animal of pleasing manners and refined tastes. He is to be found in the Rocky Mountains and in menageries. The bear has four legs. It has a tail. His colour is always black, but sometimes brown, and several of them are white. His food is potatoes and



milk, which he steals from the surrounding cottages. I am sorry that I have not been able to get any more information on this interesting subject."

"Now, Lessing, this is too bad," said Mr Williamson, not sure whether to laugh or to be angry. "Fun is all very well in its way, but we mustn't turn our lessons into fun. I am going to make a rule that after this no one is to make jokes in school-time, except me. Do you hear?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why did you write this nonsense instead of the essay I meant you to do?"

"I didn't know how to do it, sir."

"Well, next time that you don't know how to do your essay, I'll show you with much pleasure, only perhaps it will be anything but pleasure to you."

"Thank you, sir," said Lessing, without moving a muscle of his face, and we all laughed again, except Kennedy, who sat bolt upright, looking as solemn and dignified as he could.

"Why, what's the matter with you, Kennedy?" asked Mr Williamson.

"Nothing, sir."

"Are you not well? You look as if you had swallowed a poker."

Kennedy vouchsafed no answer to this inquiry, and Mr Williamson said, taking him by the ear:

"I believe you are sulky because I put you in the corner, yesterday."

"I'm not sulky."

"Are you quite happy and good-humoured?"

"Yes, sir," said Kennedy, with a dreadful scowl on his face.

"Come now, don't deny it! You are sulky! I have seen you trying to look ugly at me all the morning. This is silly of you. Look here, Kennedy, if you don't laugh the next time I make a joke I'll cane you. Do you hear?"

"Yes."

"Baby!" exclaimed Mr Williamson, provoked by his tone.

"I'm not a baby!"

"Kennedy! You are very impertinent."

"I don't care. You may cane me if you like, but you have no right to call me a baby."

"You are not fit to be talked to just now. Go and sit by yourself over there, and don't say a word, or I shall be obliged to punish you."

Kennedy got up and went to the desk Mr Williamson had pointed out, where he sat down, looking very black, and presently fell to work drawing pictures over his brother's dictionary, which was lying near him.

Now, unluckily, it so happened that some half-an-hour later, as Mr Williamson was speaking to Harry Kennedy about his exercise, he desired him to look up a word in the dictionary, and Harry reached over for his and opened it at a place where George had just drawn a by no means flattering picture of a man with a

pig's head on his shoulders, and the name "Paddy Williamson" written below.

"Oh! this is what you have been doing!" said Mr Williamson. "This is the way you give vent to your impertinence. I'll teach you, sir, if you can insult your masters with impunity."

"Oh! please, sir, it was my fault," said Harry.

"Nonsense! Kennedy Primus, have you anything to say for yourself?"

"No!"

"Well, I suppose it is too much to expect that you would have the right feeling to apologise to me for your rudeness. You will write five hundred lines this afternoon."

George tried to look indifferent, but we knew he must be very much annoyed, because that afternoon there was to be the first football match with "the Coppers," and he would be unable to play in it if he had so long an imposition to do. Harry was almost as much distressed. He had been unintentionally the means of getting his brother into this scrape, and with schoolboy logic, it seemed to him that he ought to be blamed and punished. After school, he again tried to persuade Mr Williamson to let George off and to give him the punishment instead, but did not succeed.

"My dear boy, that would be ridiculous. You have done nothing to be punished for."

"But it was my fault that you saw the picture," pleaded Harry, quite seriously.

"That's got nothing to do with it, silly boy," said Mr Williamson pinching his cheeks. "But I am not going to argue with you. I think all the better of you for wishing to excuse your brother ; but it can't be done."

Harry and I went to look for George, whom we found in a state of the most lofty indignation.

"Oh, George! I'm so sorry I opened that dictionary."

"Well, why did you do it, then?"

"I didn't know."

"Oh! of course. I hope you'll know next time. Don't bother, Harry. Do you think I care for the old fool and his five hundred lines. I don't mind a bit. If he thinks he has done me any great harm, he's very much mistaken. I don't care a button for five hundred lines."

"But you won't be able to go to the match, George."

"Yes, I shall. I'll go to the match, and write the lines too. I'll show him that I don't care for his spite."

"I say, George, if you like, I'll stop in and read out the lines to you," said I.

"I don't want you to," said Kennedy gruffly, walking away.

But Kennedy did not go to the match. He had to stop in the whole afternoon and toil away at the lines, refusing all help; and then he took them to Mr Williamson's house. This ceremony he performed with a sort of sulky air of injured innocence, which Mr Williamson was sorry to see.

"Look here, Kennedy!" he said, playfully taking

hold of him by the ear as he was going to withdraw ;  
"just wait a minute, and speak to me, will you?"

"Very well, sir," mumbled Kennedy.

"You are in a wax, still?"

"No, I'm not."

"Eh? Eh? Come now! Well, we shall put it another way. You think I have been ill using you to-day, and you wish to show me that you are offended. Isn't that the case?"

"I don't like being humbugged before the other fellows," said Kennedy after a pause.

"Well, perhaps I have no business to humbug you, as you call it. And I will even say that I was rather out of temper to-day and treated you too harshly."

Kennedy opened his eyes.

"But I say, Kennedy, if you had these boys to look after, and were being constantly worried and bothered by them, don't you think that you would get in a wax sometimes?"

"I'm afraid I should, sir," said Kennedy.

"Then you oughtn't to be hard on me if you sometimes provoke me into saying and doing what perhaps I am sorry for afterwards."

The clouds of injured innocence were passing away from Kennedy's face, and a smile was beginning to break out.

"And do you know, if every boy was to behave as rudely to me as you did to-day, I would very soon be raging all round like a mad bull."

Kennedy grinned outright.

"Well, you are not in the sulks with me, now, are you?"

"No, sir. I know I was rather cheek—I mean to say, I won't do it again."

"All right! We'll forget all about this, and be friends again, and live happily together all the rest of our lives. And I must try to remember that you don't like being made fun of before the rest of the boys. As you say, it isn't fair to chaff you, because you can't chaff me back."

"I'm sure I never said that," said Kennedy, laughing.

"Never mind! You thought it, at all events. Poor little boy, has he been kept in all afternoon to write nasty, stupid lines? What a shame! We must keep a guard on ourselves after this. Your temper is too short, and my tongue is too long."

"No, sir! I don't mind your chaffing."

"H'm! As we saw to-day. We'll say no more about it, Kennedy. Good night!"

"Good night, sir!"

And Kennedy went home in a much happier frame of mind than that in which he came to Mr Williamson's house. Still, when he thought over it, he had a certain uncomfortable feeling that his master had somehow come over him, and tickled him out of his sulks, as it were; and George didn't much like the idea of being come over by anybody. He was well enough pleased to have made it up with Mr Williamson, but was glad

that none of the other boys were aware of what had passed at the interview.

Of course I couldn't know that he was a little sore on this point, so I was unlucky enough to say to him with a view of re-establishing friendly relations between us :

"Well, George, how did you get on with Williamson?"

"Mind your own business," said Kennedy, with his grandest air: so for another day there was a coldness between us.

We little knew what that day was to bring forth.





## CHAPTER XXIV.

HARRY.

**H**URRAH!" shouted Harry Kennedy as he got out of bed next morning, while the rest of us were still thinking about it, and wishing that the gong which had just done sounding in our ears was at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean.

"What's the matter?" said I, starting up and rubbing my eyes. It is rather unusual to hear a fellow shouting out "hurrah!" at seven o'clock on a cold winter morning.

"Come and see!"

We jumped out of bed and rushed to the window, and lo and behold! the ground and the house-tops shone pure white in the grey dawn. There had been a heavy fall of snow through the night.

"Oh, how jolly! Won't we have some fun!"

But it was too cold to stand looking at the snow, and we began to dress ourselves as fast as we could. No such easy work; for the water in our jugs was frozen.



We had to break the ice, and set to work splashing ourselves manfully, though some shivering souls lamented that we had no warm water, and were rewarded for our fortitude by a fine, healthy glow, which thrilled through every pulse, and put us in excellent spirits. To a well-regulated schoolboy mind, there is always something invigorating in frosty weather.

How we did wish the old Minster clock would go faster that forenoon, and with what a shout we rushed into the play-ground and began to pelt each other ! But instead of getting up sides and having a regular game, like donkeys that we were, we must needs go throwing snowballs through the railings at the people who were passing over the Minster green. First came a grave, dignified, old gentleman, who walked on majestically, pretending to take no notice of our attempts to hit him, but was nevertheless beginning to get very angry when Henderson stopped it, and he was allowed to go on his way in peace. Then came a young man, who had been a Grammar School boy himself a few years before. He laughed good-humouredly and returned the fire, but was soon overwhelmed and obliged to quicken his pace to get out of range. Then a baker's boy, who waxed wroth and began to vituperate, which had only the effect of bringing a storm of snowballs whistling about his ears, till he ignominiously took to flight. Then came two young ladies, who shrunk back when they saw what was going on, but I am glad to say, for the honour of the Grammar School, that the boys

cheered them and stopped shying. Whereupon the ladies took courage and walked on, half-fearing, half-smiling, and the only snowball which was thrown at them was by a rude little monkey in the lower first form, who had his ears well boxed by somebody immediately afterwards. Next came Mr Penny, the master of a private school with which our boys had an old feud, and he seemed likely to catch it. But as soon as a snowball was thrown at him he walked into the school and complained to Mr Dalton, and the consequence was, that we were all called in at once and set down to our lessons, which we thought a great shame.

At twelve o'clock, however, Mr Dalton announced that there would be a half-holiday, if we would promise not to molest people in the streets, but go out and have a snowball fight on the common. So we poured out of school, cheering and shouting in the brightest possible spirits. There was no sign of a thaw, and we began to talk about skating.

After dinner I got leave to go down town and buy a pair of skates. I had not gone twenty yards before a snowball came whizzing past my ear, and I saw the Kangaroo running after me.

I have a reason for remembering that walk well.

After buying the skates, we were going home by the racecourse to see if a pond at the east end of it was frozen over. I think I see before me now Harry's happy little face, glowing with health and smiles, and his cheery voice ringing through the frosty air, as we stepped out

over the crisp, shining snow, laughing and chattering as only schoolboys can. We talked of the approaching Christmas holidays, part of which the Kennedys were to spend at our house, and planned all sorts of amusements which we would have. As for my quarrel with George Kennedy, Harry said I needn't be afraid of that lasting long.

"He hasn't spoken to me since yesterday, but I know he will, as soon as he gets a chance. George is not a fellow to keep in a bad humour long."

We were close upon the racecourse, and just then we heard a great shouting, and running forward found a snowball fight going on between a number of our boys and "the Coppers."

"Oh, come along! Here's some fun," cried Harry, and we rushed off to join our friends, running the gantlet of a fire of snowballs from a few of the enemy's stragglers.

But before we came up our side had taken to flight, and we found ourselves mingled in a crowd of fugitives, who were all scampering off like a flock of sheep. The Coppers pressed us hard, and we foolishly took refuge in a paddock behind the Grand Stand. But no sooner were we inside it, than we saw what a mistake we had made. We were hemmed up in a narrow yard, and were a perfect target for the snowballs, which came pouring down thick and fast like shells. The only way of getting out was the gate by which we had entered, and the enemy lost no time in placing themselves opposite that in a ring.

We were in a trap.

"I say, you fellows," cried George Kennedy, "this isn't fair. Let us get clear out."

But the enemy only answered by a shout of triumph, and the ring that guarded the gate went on making snowballs, and piling them up for use as soon as we should appear.

"How are we to get out?"

"*Vi et snowballibus*," said Lessing.

"All right, you lead the way."

"I could not think of depriving you of the honour. Now, Abbing, here's your chance of distinguishing yourself."

"No, thank you! I think you ought to go first, Lessing, because you are such a good runner."

"Well, now, I think it ought to be Balbus, because he is so fat, and we can all get behind him."

"Oh, but this wont do!" cried George Kennedy, as one snowball knocked off his cap, and another struck him on the neck while he was stooping to pick it up.

Suddenly the spirit of Decius Mus entered into Harry, and shouting out "here goes!" he made a dash through the gate, with Phillips and his brother close behind him. This forlorn hope was received with a storm of snowballs, but they rushed on, followed by the rest of us, and we succeeded in getting out safely and taking up a new position, all except one or two fellows who were caught and had their faces rubbed with snow, according to the usages of war.

"Charge them! charge!" was now the cry on our side, and we dashed forward so desperately that the Coppers, all scattered about and in confusion as they were, took to flight in their turn, and we pursued them for some two hundred yards. Then they made a stand, and the combat raged furiously for some minutes, without any great success on either side. The Kennedys performed prodigies of valour, and Phillips also distinguished himself in a most unexpected way. I was fired to deeds of valour by the example of my friends, and not only made as much noise as anybody, but several times rushed up to the very faces of the enemy and discharged my snowballs at eminent risk of being caught and "rubbed."

But once more panic spread through our ranks. The enemy charged vigorously, and off we went in full flight.

"Stand!" shouted those in front. "Stand!" echoed the rear, running faster than ever. "Oh, you muffs, why don't you stop?" panted little Wood. But nobody did stop, till the foremost of the pursuers halting for a moment to rub some of their prisoners, we took courage and faced about once more.

"Vain was the valour of the brave." The Coppers outnumbered us by two to one, and gradually they drove us over the open ground, till we were brought to bay with our backs to a wall. There was not much snow here, and we were in a bad plight. The enemy surrounded us, and began to close in with shouts of triumph.

"Oh, you cads! you are putting stones in your snow-

balls. Stop that!" cried George Kennedy; but the only answer was a howl of derision.

"Charge them! charge them!" shouted the Kangaroo, his face glowing with excitement.

"We *must* lick them. Let's cut out at this side and get behind them."

"Cut round the flank, you fellows, with all the speed you may. I, with two more to help me, will hold the foe at bay," spouted Lessing. "Press where ye see big Kennedy, amidst the hullabaloo; and be your oriflamme to day, the tail of the Kangaroo!"

"That's the plan," cried George Kennedy. "Some of you come with me and charge through. The rest run round by that side. Come on!"

Some half-dozen of us followed and made a dash at the enemy's centre. This manœuvre succeeded admirably, for the Coppers all closed in to overwhelm us, and the rest of our fellows had an opportunity of stealing round by the flank and getting behind them.

How the other fellows got through I don't know, but after knocking over two of the enemy, I saw my old opponent, the Grunter, rushing at me. I dodged aside, but he sprung upon me and dragged me down, and for a minute we wrestled on the ground. I struggled desperately, but it was of no use.

"Would you? would you?" said the Grunter, pinning me down, and proceeding to rub my face in the snow "Wait a minute, I'm not done with you yet."

At that moment there was a shout of—

"Stop! Stop! There's a fellow hurt."

The Grunter relaxed his hold to look round. I shook him off, and springing up, saw that the snow-balling had stopped, and a crowd of boys were running together not far off. Half-a-dozen bounds brought me among them, and I saw Harry Kennedy lying on the snow, his eyes closed, and his face very pale.

He had been hit on the head.

"Who's hurt!" cried George Kennedy, pushing his way through the crowd, "Harry! What's the matter with you? Can't he speak? Oh, he's killed!" and he flung himself on his knees beside his brother, with a wild look of alarm.

"I think he's only stunned," said Lessing. "Stand back, you fellows, and don't press on him. We must carry him home."

"Most of the Coppers were slinking off in terror at finding what had happened. They said he was dead; but every one of us was eager to do what he could, though we were so horrified that we did not know what to do. Lessing alone showed presence of mind. He hailed a carriage which happened to be passing over the racecourse. Kennedy was lifted up and put into it, and Lessing told me to run for a doctor.

\* \* \* \*

Our merriment was over for that day. Harry Kennedy was lying in the sick-room ill of concussion of the brain, and the doctor gave very little hopes of his recovery. He had not once opened his eyes, nor spoken,

and none of us had seen him except his brother. Our laughter was hushed, we spoke in whispers, and moved about quietly—awe-struck at the thought of what we could scarcely believe to be at hand.

Over and over again I asked Mrs Pearson and Mr Vials to let me see him—only once—but they would not allow me. The doctor had strictly forbidden that he should be excited. All the afternoon I remained in sickening anxiety. Well I remember how miserable I was; but I cannot describe it. I wandered about the house—I watched at the door of the room—I seemed to see him lying in pain, and hear his voice calling upon me. Only in these wretched hours did I come to know how much I loved him.

If I could but have been of use in some way! I comforted myself a little by going to feed two white rabbits belonging to Harry; though I declare I was almost angry at them for the greedy way in which they ate, without seeing or caring that it was not from the hand of their master. They seemed so selfish; and even Abbing had showed his sympathy by spending a penny in lettuces for them.

George came to me every now and then to tell me how Harry was. We didn't say a word about our quarrel; we were too unhappy to think of it. But George remembered, with bitter sorrow, that the last time he had spoken to his brother it was in anger. Never, while he lives, will he forget that!

\* \* \* \* \*



It grew dark, and the doctor came again, but there was no change. I went into the schoolroom with the other boys, and pretended to prepare my lessons ; but I did not know one word in the pages before me. I could only think of the boy whom I had come to love as a brother, who was dying in the room above my head, and I not at his side.

The hour of preparation passed wearily and slowly. Just before it was over, there was a knock at the door. Mr Vialls opened it, and told me I was wanted.

I found George in the passage, and he whispered to me :

"You may come and see him now. He knows us, and can speak."

"Oh ! George, will he die ?"

George pressed my hand, and said not a word. We rushed up the stairs three at a time ; but when we reached the sick-room we paused, and entered cautiously on tiptoe.

He was lying so still, looking so pale ; but he smiled when he saw us, and held out his hand.

"I am glad to see you, Bob. I have been hurt. The doctor thinks I am very bad."

"My dear boy, don't say that," said Mrs Pearson.

"I heard him say so. I feel very weak and sleepy. There must have been a stone in the snowball, George."

"Who did it, Harry ? Tell me, and I'll kill him !" cried George, fiercely, heedless of Mrs Pearson's look of reproach.

"No, no ! he didn't mean to hurt me. Don't speak so."

Oh! Harry, you are a better boy than I am!"

"Don't cry, George. Perhaps I'll get better. Have you had tea yet? I say, Bob, old fellow, don't go away. Mr Vialls says—— What was I saying? Where's mamma? Didn't you say she was coming, Mrs Pearson?"

"She'll be here soon, my dear. We have sent for her."

"I should like to see her. I do hope she will come soon."

By this time the boys were at prayers below, and we heard them beginning the evening hymn.

"Does the singing disturb you? Shall I tell them to stop?" asked Mrs Pearson.

"I like it," said Harry, and these were the last words he spoke on earth.

Sweetly and solemnly came the sound of the familiar words and the clear boyish voices——

"Glory to Thee, my God, this night  
For all the blessings of the light ;  
Keep me, oh keep me, King of Kings,  
Beneath Thine own Almighty wings.

"Forgive me, Lord, for Thy dear Son,  
The ills that I this day have done,  
That with the world, myself, and Thee,  
I, ere I sleep, at peace may be.

"Teach me to live that I may dread  
The grave as little as my bed ;  
Teach me to die, that so I may  
Rise glorious at the awful day."

Harry appeared to listen to the singing, and we thought we saw his lips move; but before it was over, he had closed his eyes and began to breathe heavily.

"Is the light too strong for you?" asked Mr Vials, who had come into the room just then. "Shall I turn down the lamp?"

He gave no answer. Mr Vials glanced at Mrs Pearson, and George and I understood what he meant, and looked on with scared faces, waiting for what was to come. It seemed as if we could not speak or move. The only thing which broke the stillness was the frisking of Harry's rabbits, which had been brought into the room by his desire. They were chasing each other about among our feet, and now and then sat up and comically rubbed their faces with their fore-paws, and seemed astonished that no notice was taken of them. We felt that their frolicsomeness was out of place, and yet none of us had the heart to drive them away.

We could scarcely believe that it was true—that it was not a strange and horrible dream, from which we should presently wake to hear his cheery voice, and to see him strong and full of spirits. But there he lay, motionless, and never opened his eyes again.

We watched thus for about half-an-hour. How it passed I do not know; but at length there came a moment when he gave a little start—a gasp—

"Oh, Harry!" sobbed George.

I had hurried out of the room. I could not bear to look at him. I scarcely knew what I was doing. My

heart was stunned, as it were, by what had happened. But as I groped my way along the dark passage, I felt something rubbing against my leg. It was one of Harry's rabbits which had followed me. I stooped down and took it up in my arms, and as its soft white fur nestled against my cheek, the spell seemed broken, and I cried.

\* \* \* \* \*

I saw him once more. The old smile had come back to his face, and it seemed so calm and happy, that but for its whiteness, I could have thought he was asleep. As I looked upon him with tear-dimmed eyes, I remembered how kind and how dear he was to me and to all his companions; how fearless of everything but dishonour; how pure and merry and frank; and, falling down on my knees, I prayed God to make me, too, a better boy.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was a dull, raw, November afternoon when we turned away from his grave. Scarcely one eye was dry as we heard the solemn words spoken over the coffin of him whom we all loved, and who a few days before had been among us, none brighter or more full of life. As for me, I felt as if the world was henceforth going to be cold and wretched. I took one last look into the grave, where the sunshine of these summer months seemed to have been hidden—then I felt an arm steal through mine, and heard George Kennedy's broken voice murmuring in my ear: "You and I must always be friends."

\* \* \* \* \*

I have other tales to tell of Whitminster Grammar School, and shall continue my story some day if this part of it be approved of. Indeed, you may not be able to know why I have undertaken this record of my school days, until you see it complete. But I lay down my pen now, for I have no heart to write when I think of the quiet, green grave of Harry Kennedy, the best of my schoolboy friends.













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